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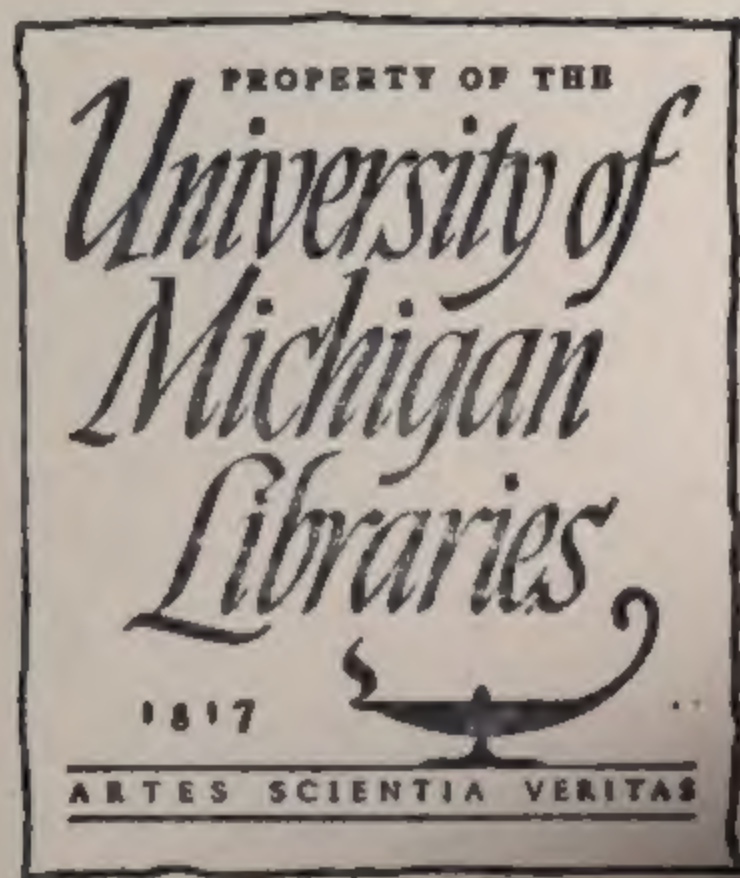
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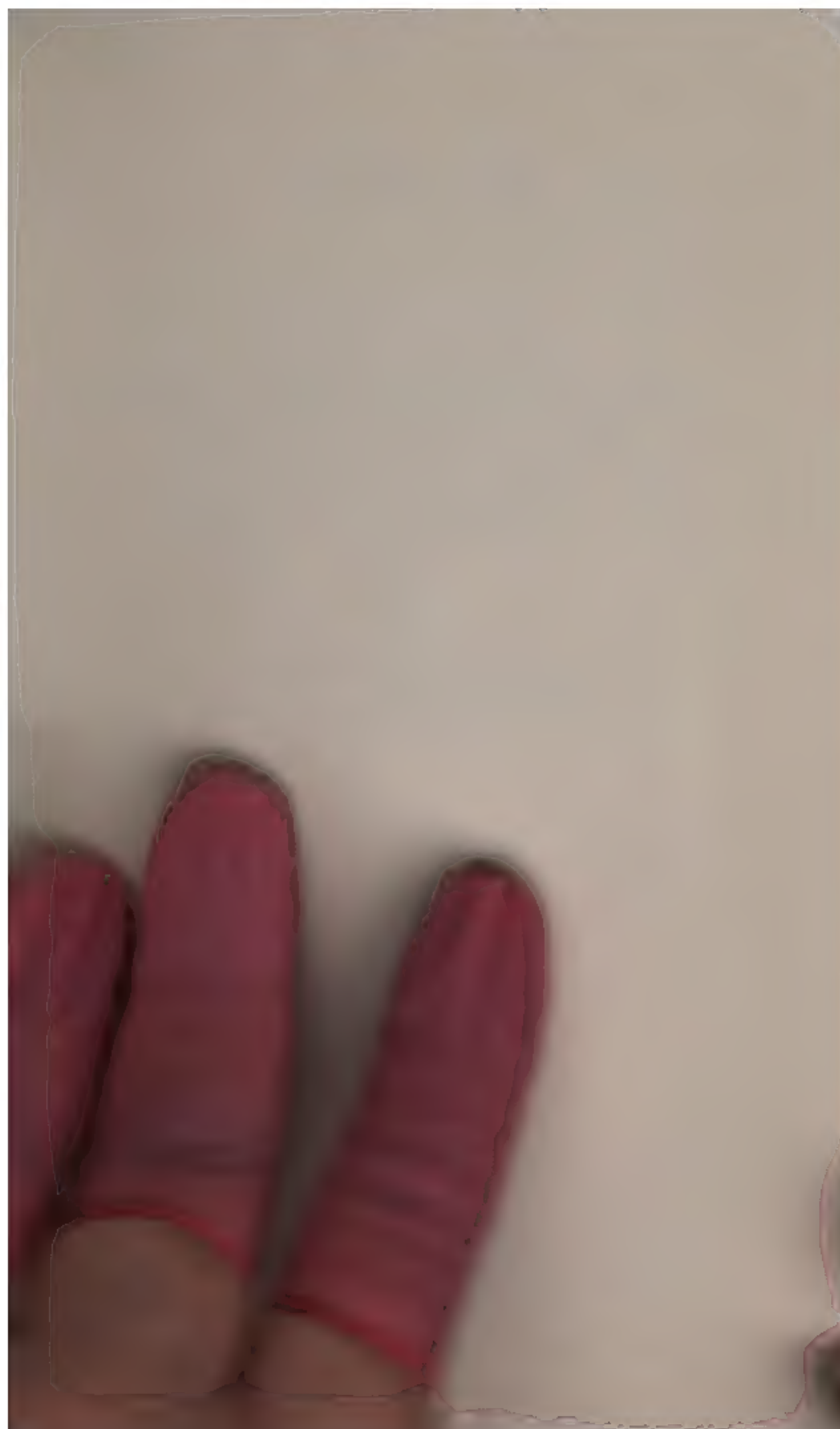
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**STUDIES**

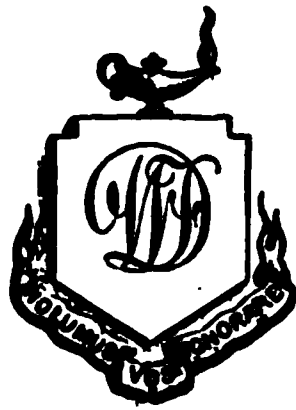
**IN**

**PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY.**

**BY**

**JOSEPH HAVEN, D.D.,**

**PROFESSOR IN CHICAGO THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.**



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The author is well aware that neither metaphysics nor theology commend themselves to the popular taste at the present day. On the contrary, it is quite the fashion to decry them, and regard them as of little worth. There are those, however,—and the number

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is not a few, — who, amid the busy activities of an earnest and practical life, are accustomed to think on these matters ; who have felt the peculiar fascination of these grand themes and problems, which in all ages have exercised the most thoughtful minds ; and it is for such that I have written.

These discussions are presented, it need hardly be added, not in the interests of any particular religious denomination or form of faith, but as simple and independent investigations of truth, which should ever be the aim of the Christian scholar.

CHICAGO, January, 1869.

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**PART I.**

**STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY.**



# STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY.

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## I.

### THE PHILOSOPHY OF SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON, AND ITS RECENT THEOLOGICAL APPLICATIONS.<sup>1</sup>

IN October, 1829, appeared, in the Edinburgh Review, an article sharply criticizing the *Cours de Philosophie* (then recently published) by Victor Cousin. This article, by its profound and masterly analysis, its critical sharpness, its combined candor and fearlessness, its remarkable erudition, at once attracted attention as the work of no ordinary mind. It was understood to be from the pen of Sir William Hamilton, Baronet, of the ancient family of that name, a lawyer by profession, at that time filling the chair of Civil Law and Universal History in the University of Edinburgh; known to the literary circles of the metropolis as a man of extensive and varied acquisition, but not previously of established repute in the world of letters. A few years previously he had been an unsuccessful competitor with Wilson for the chair of Moral Philosophy in the university.

On the continent, at the time of which we speak, few names were more illustrious in the world of letters and philosophy than that of Victor Cousin, then in the

<sup>1</sup> From the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for January, 1861, Vol. xviii. No. 69.

height of his fame as Professor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Letters at Paris. His personal history, his learning, his reputation as a critic and an author, his familiar acquaintance with systems of philosophy, ancient and modern, his clearness of thought, united with a beautiful transparency of style and a glowing fervor of delivery, rendered him as a lecturer peculiarly attractive. Audiences of two thousand persons not unfrequently thronged his lecture-room to listen to the discussion of themes not usually considered attractive by the multitude.

To assail the favorite theory of a philosopher so distinguished might seem hazardous; but the masterly ability with which the attack was made placed the writer in the front rank of philosophical critics.<sup>1</sup>

This article was followed in the succeeding year by another, on the Philosophy of Perception, in review of Jouffroy's edition of the Works of Reid, in which the leading principles of the author's doctrine of perception were first promulged, and the merits of other systems, particularly the doctrines of Brown, subjected to the most severe and rigid criticism. Three years later appeared, in the same Quarterly and from the same pen, the famous article on logic, in which the English logicians, and especially Whately, are somewhat severely handled. The reputation of the writer, as at once a formidable critic and a most profound and original thinker, was now fully established; and in 1836 he was elected to the chair of Logic and Metaphysics in the University of Edinburgh, which he filled until his death, in 1856.

Of the general characteristics of Hamilton as a phi-

<sup>1</sup> See note (A.) at the end of this Article.

losophical writer, there is little need to speak, since they are already so widely known. Since Kant, the world has seen no greater thinker than this man ; nor was even the sage of Königsberg his superior. One knows not which most to admire, his wonderful power of analysis, or his erudition, equally wonderful—qualities which in combination render him at once the most formidable critic of other systems, and the most clear and far-seeing discerner of truth in matters of subtile speculation, that has appeared since the revival of letters. His range of information was almost literally boundless, comprehending not merely matters connected with philosophy, but all topics of general knowledge. More widely conversant with metaphysical literature than perhaps any other man living, he seemed equally familiar with the whole range of theological, historical, and classical lore. After the manner of Leibnitz and of Aristotle—to both of whom, in other respects also, his mind bore a marked resemblance—he seems to have made himself master of what the human mind had as yet in its progress attained, as the preparatory step toward the enlargement of those boundaries by contributions of his own. To that power of philosophic analysis by which he was able, as by intuition, to resolve the most intricate and complicated problem of thought into its simple and primary elements, and that remarkable erudition by which he was able to take in at a glance the whole range of previous thought and labor on any subject, we have but to add a style almost without a parallel for precision, definiteness, and strength, and we have the chief elements of this man's power as a thinker and writer.

Nor was he wanting in that attribute inseparable



from true greatness — candor towards those from whom he differed. Terrible as were the weapons of his criticism, no man knew better how to respect an antagonist, even while demolishing his opinions. Thus, for example, he speaks of Cousin: "a philosopher, for whose genius and character I already had the warmest admiration — an admiration which every succeeding year has only augmented, justified, and confirmed. Nor, in saying this, need I make any reservation; for I admire even where I dissent; and were M. Cousin's speculations on the absolute utterly abolished, to him would still remain the honor of doing more himself, and of contributing more to what has been done by others, in the furtherance of an enlightened philosophy than any other living individual in France — I might say, in Europe."

In personal appearance Hamilton was dignified and prepossessing, of somewhat commanding form and bearing, resembling in some respects our countryman, the late Daniel Webster. There was the same lofty and massive brow, the same repose and majesty of the features, and that certain stateliness of manner which marks a kingly soul conscious of its own power. In the later years of his life his natural reserve was increased by a difficulty of utterance, resulting from a partial paralysis of the vocal organs. Under these circumstances, a stranger on first introduction would hardly feel at ease; while at the same time he could not fail to be impressed with the whole appearance and conversation of the man. In the respects mentioned, Hamilton contrasted strongly with Schelling, whom in those days, not long before his death, one might have seen at Berlin, — a lean and shrivelled old man, but

full of vivacity and fire, bowed and worn with the labors of years, but retaining all the enthusiasm of younger days,—busily engaged to the very last in elaborating his second system of philosophy, and to this end combating his own former views; pleasantly remarking that he found himself and his own former pupils the most difficult of all his antagonists to refute.

As a psychologist, Hamilton should not be judged merely by the Lectures on Metaphysics published since his death. Interesting and able as they undoubtedly are, and containing much that is profound and original, they are not the measure of his strength, nor are they the result of his maturer studies. Prepared, in the first instance, merely for the class-room, thrown off in haste during the progress of the session at the rate of three per week,—each lecture usually on the night preceding its delivery, and the whole course within the period of five months,—never subsequently rewritten, nor even revised for publication by the author, they are by no means to be taken as the final and careful statement of his views. As such he did not himself regard them. They were the earlier and (it is not too much to say) the cruder productions of his mind. Taken as a system of mental science they are singularly incomplete—dwelling at undue length on preliminary matters, and elaborating in detail certain portions of the science, as, for example, the doctrine of perception, to the almost entire exclusion of other and equally important topics; giving but a meagre outline of the sensibilities, and nothing, or almost nothing, upon the will. These features, together with occasional inconsistencies and inadvertencies of statement, are the natural result of the circumstances under which the

work was originally prepared. It is not to these lectures, consequently, but to the notes and dissertations appended to his edition of Reid, and the articles in the *Edinburgh Review*, subsequently collected and published under his own eye, entitled "Discussions on Philosophy and Literature," that we should refer for the real system and the true strength of the man.

Even in these, it must be confessed, the system lies fragmentary and incomplete. It is to be regretted that we have not from his own pen, and as the result of his riper and later studies, a carefully prepared treatise on psychology.

It is not, however, merely or chiefly as a psychologist that Hamilton is to be regarded. His mind was logical rather than metaphysical, we should judge, in its natural bias. It is from the point of view and with the eye of a logician that he usually looks at the problems of philosophy, little given to and little believing in the speculations of a pure ontology, nor, on the other hand, in his observation of the mind, content with merely reviewing the given facts and phenomena of consciousness, but seeking to reduce them if possible to order under those great laws of thought of which logic is with him the expression and the science. It was to logic, as is well known, that the chief strength and principal studies of his later years were directed; and it was upon his labors in this department that he wished his reputation chiefly to rest.

The tendency to a logical explanation of psychological phenomena and metaphysical problems is shown, for example, in the manner in which he deals with the doctrine of the infinite and absolute, as held by transcendental writers; educing the general law that all

thought lies in the interval between two extremes, unconditioned and inconceivable, but of which extremes one or the other must, by law of the excluded middle, be true; deriving thus the grand principle that all thought is conditioned, and all knowledge limited and relative; and finally, reducing to this general law the principle of causality, which by Leibnitz, Kant, Reid, Stewart, Cousin, and the great body of English and French philosophers has been held to be an original principle or datum of the human mind.

With these remarks of a general nature upon the character of Hamilton as a philosopher, we proceed to notice more particularly some specific features of his system.

Were we required to point out the peculiarities of his system,—in what chief aspects the Scotch philosophy as held by this great master presents itself as compared with other and previous systems,—passing by the whole science of logic, which he claims to have reconstructed and amplified, and confining ourselves to psychology, we should name first and chiefly the *Doctrine of Perception*, with the closely related topic of consciousness; while as a general principle, underlying the whole system and fundamental to it, appears the doctrine of the relativity and consequent limitation of human thought, or, as it may be termed, the *Doctrine of the Conditioned*. To these points our attention will be chiefly directed in the present article.

A brief survey of the state of philosophical speculation in Europe at the time when Hamilton appeared, will best enable us to appreciate his labors and his contributions to philosophy in respect to the points now named.

The earlier part of the present century witnessed a peculiar awakening and activity of the philosophic mind in Europe. The previous century had closed, and the present opened, with the philosophy of Locke in the ascendant; as indeed it had long been, both in Great Britain and in France. In the latter country that philosophy was known, indeed, chiefly through the medium of Condillac, who, in developing, may be said to have corrupted, the doctrines of Locke. In England, also, Hume, embracing the general principles of the system which Locke had advanced, and carrying them to their extreme but legitimate conclusions, had laid the foundations of a wide and dangerous scepticism in philosophy. Alarmed by these results, there had already arisen, at the close of the last century, a reaction of the public mind in certain quarters. Simultaneously in Germany and in Britain did such reaction manifest itself; and in both as the result of Hume's speculations; Kant in the former and Reid in the latter maintaining that, above and beyond the ideas derived from experience and observation, there are in the mind, connate, if not innate, certain great principles, universal and necessary, prior to, and the foundation of, all experience. Such, in brief, was the philosophic life of the last half of the eighteenth century — Condillac in France and Hume in England carrying out to false positions the principles of Locke; Reid in Scotland and Kant in Germany laying, each in his own way, the foundations of a better system.

The influence of Kant became speedily predominant in Germany; and before his death, in 1804, he was acknowledged as the master mind of Europe in the domain of speculative thought; while, in turn, the

sober, common-sense philosophy (as it has been termed) of the Scotch school was gradually attracting attention and gaining influence both in Britain and France. To this result, as regards the latter country, the labors of Royer Collard (who advocated this system) and subsequently of Jouffroy (who gave to his countrymen an excellent edition of the Works of Reid, and of the Moral Philosophy of Stewart) greatly contributed.

Such were the intellectual influences predominant in the department of philosophic science in the early part of the present century — the period when Sir William Hamilton, then passing from childhood to those years when the mind usually receives its first impulses and impressions in this direction, may be supposed to have commenced his studies in philosophy. Fichte had then come into notoriety as professor in the leading university of Germany. Schelling and Hegel were just coming upon the stage. It is easy to see the influence which would be exerted upon a youthful and inquisitive mind by the leading theories and the philosophic spirit of the time. Adopting in the main, and as the basis of his views, the ground-principles of Reid, he is at the same time an admirer, if not in some sense a disciple, of Kant; and in the general spirit and drift of his philosophy, as well as in some of its specific doctrines, may be traced the influence of the sage of Königsberg. In the grand doctrine of the relativity of human knowledge, and the consequent denial of the possibility of knowing the absolute and infinite, he is with Kant as against Schelling and Cousin. In the rejection, in fact, of the whole scheme of transcendental and rationalistic philosophy, he follows Kant. He adopts the Kantian division (then just coming into use) of the powers of



the mind into three great classes — the faculties of *knowledge*, of *feeling*, and of *will and desire*; which latter are classed together under the title of *conative* powers. He adopts, also, the Kantian notion of freedom.

Passing now to notice more particularly the doctrine of *perception* and its connected topics, as held by Hamilton, we need hardly remark that, so far as psychology is concerned, it is here that his chief labor has been expended and his chief laurels won. It was precisely at this point that philosophy was just then most at fault, and most needed the clear discrimination and decision of a master mind. It had long been the prevalent doctrine of the schools, widely divergent as they were on other points, that the mind is immediately cognizant only of its own ideas, and not directly of external objects; the latter being known, so far as they were held to be known at all, only through the medium of the mind's ideas, and not immediately or face to face. This doctrine, under a great variety of modifications, had passed, as to its essential principle, virtually unchallenged for centuries, and had been the belief, in fact, of the great body of philosophers, ancient and modern. To Reid belongs the honor of announcing positively and maintaining boldly, though not without occasional inconsistency, the opposite doctrine of the immediate cognizance of external objects in the act of perception. But while he saw clearly the true doctrine, he had not given it, in all respects, its full development or its ablest statement. Particularly, he had failed to discriminate between the various forms which the opposite doctrine had at different times and in the different schools assumed, and had therefore failed to

give due sharpness and precision to the statement of the true theory. This it remained for Hamilton to do; and this he has done, fully, completely, and once for all. The doctrine which Reid had left incomplete he elucidates and perfects, shows it to be the true and only tenable position, and that its rejection, logically and consistently carried out, leads to absolute idealism, or the denial of all objective and external reality. By a masterly analysis he reduces to a system and gives a complete classification of the various theories that may be and have been held in regard to perception, draws the dividing line between presentative and representative knowledge, and maintains that we know the external world, as we know the operations of our own minds, by immediate and intuitive perception.

“If we interrogate consciousness concerning the point in question, the response is categorical and clear. When I concentrate my attention in the simplest act of perception, I return from my observation with the most irresistible conviction of *two* facts, or rather, two branches of the *same* fact — that *I am*, and that *something different from me exists*. In this act I am conscious of myself as the perceiving subject, and of an external reality as the object perceived; and I am conscious of both existences in the same indivisible moment of intuition. The knowledge of the subject does not precede nor follow the knowledge of the object; neither determines, neither is determined by, the other. The two terms of correlation stand in mutual counterpoise and equal independence; they are given as connected in the synthesis of knowledge, but as contrasted in the antithesis of existence. Such is the fact of perception as revealed in consciousness,

and as it determines mankind in general in their equal assurance of the reality of an external world and of the existence of their own minds. *Consciousness declares our knowledge of material qualities to be intuitive.*"<sup>1</sup>

According as the truth of this testimony of consciousness is unconditionally admitted, or in part or wholly rejected, there result divers possible and actual systems of philosophy, thus classified by Hamilton. If the veracity of consciousness be fully admitted, and the antithesis of mind and matter as given in perception be taken as real, we have the system of *natural realism*. If the reality of the antithesis be denied, we have the scheme of *absolute identity*, mind and matter being mere phenomenal modifications of one common substance. If, further, we deny the independence of one or the other of the two original factors, the subject or the object, as given in perception, making the subject the original and deriving the object from it, we have *idealism*; making the object the original and deriving the subject from it, *materialism*. Or if, again, we deny the reality of both subject and object as given in the act of perception, consciousness being regarded as merely a phenomenon, we obtain *nihilism*. There is still another course possible, that is, with the idealist, to deny the immediate cognizance of an external world in the act of perception; while at the same time we do not, with the idealist, deny the actual existence of that world, but, on the contrary, assume its existence on the ground of an irresistible and universal belief in its reality. This system, the most illogical and inconsequent of all, yet in fact adopted by the great majority

<sup>1</sup> Discussions on Phil. and Lit. (Am. ed.), p. 60.

of philosophers, from the ancients to Descartes, and from Descartes to Brown, is termed by Hamilton, *cosmothetic realism*, or *hypothetical realism*.

It is against this system, accordingly, that Sir William directs his chief attack, tracing it to its source, and showing it to be without the shadow of a foundation. It rests upon the tacitly assumed principle — a principle that has strangely passed unchallenged through successive schools of philosophy for centuries — that the *relation of knowledge* implies the *analogy of existence*; in other words, that like knows like, or that what is known must be *similar* to that which knows — a principle that lies at the basis of all systems which deny the immediate cognizance of external objects in perception. To this principle may be traced the *intuitional species* of the schools, the *ideas* of Descartes, the *pre-established harmony* of Leibnitz, the *vision in Deity* of Mallebranche, the *phenomena* of Kant, the *external states* of Brown. This principle Hamilton characterizes as “nothing more than an irrational attempt to explain what is in itself inexplicable. How the similar or the same is conscious of itself is not a whit less inconceivable than how one contrary is immediately percipient of another. It at best only removes our admitted ignorance by one step back; and then, in place of our knowledge simply originating from the incomprehensible, it ostentatiously departs from the absurd.”<sup>1</sup>

The theory of representative perception is shown by Hamilton to be unnecessary, destructive of itself, and destructive of all evidence of the existence of an external world, — unnecessary, inasmuch as it undertakes to assign a reason for that which requires and admits

<sup>1</sup> Discussions, etc., p. 68.

of no explanation beyond the simple fact; while the reason assigned is itself no less incomprehensible than the theory which it proposes to explain, it being just as inexplicable how an unknown external object can be represented to the mind as how it can be immediately perceived, i.e. without representation;—destructive of itself, inasmuch as it denies the veracity of consciousness, which testifies to our immediate perception of an external world, and thus subverts the foundation and destroys the possibility of all knowledge. "The first act of hypothetical realism is thus an act of suicide; philosophy thereafter is at best but an enchanted corpse, awaiting only the exorcism of the sceptic to relapse into its proper nothingness." The theory is, moreover, destructive of all evidence that an external world really exists; since the only evidence we have of such a reality is the testimony of consciousness in the act of perception, and that is by the theory deliberately set aside as unreliable; thus rendering problematical the existence of the very facts which it undertakes to account for.

We cannot follow in detail the arguments by which Sir William proceeds to demolish the theory of representative perception in its various forms. It is sufficient to say that the work is most effectually done, and the question, it would seem, put at rest for the present, if not for all time.

The precise relation of perception and sensation to each other is clearly pointed out by Hamilton. Perception is only a special mode of knowledge, and sensation is a special mode of feeling. The relation is therefore a generic one—the relation which holds universally between knowledge and feeling. These are always

co-existent, yet always distinct, and thus it is with respect to perception and sensation. "A cognition is objective, that is, our consciousness is then relative to something different from the present state of the mind itself; a feeling, on the contrary, is subjective, that is, our consciousness is exclusively limited to the pleasure or pain experienced by the thinking subject. Cognition and feeling are always co-existent. The purest act of knowledge is always colored by some feeling of pleasure or pain; for no energy is absolutely indifferent, and the grossest feeling exists only as it is known in consciousness. This being the case of cognition and feeling in general, the same is true of perception and sensation in particular. Perception proper is the consciousness, through the senses, of the qualities of an object known as different from self; sensation proper is the consciousness of the subjective affection of pleasure or pain which accompanies that act of knowledge. Perception is thus the objective element in the complex state — the element of cognition; sensation is the subjective element — the element of feeling."<sup>1</sup>

The great law which regulates the phenomena of perception and sensation in their reciprocal relation to each other — a law which Kant had indeed already indicated — is first clearly and prominently announced by Hamilton. It is this: Knowledge and feeling, perception and sensation, though always co-existent, are always in the inverse ratio of each other — a law at once simple and universal, yet overlooked hitherto by the great body of psychologists. That this is the law of mental action is shown by reference to the several senses, in which it appears that in proportion as any

<sup>1</sup> Lectures, Metaphysics, p. 385.



given sense has more of the one element it has less of the other. In sight, for example, perception is at the maximum, sensation at the minimum. Hearing, on the other hand, while less extensive in its sphere of knowledge than sight, is more intensive in its capacity of sensation. We have greater pleasure and greater pain from single sounds than from single colors. So also with regard to touch: in those parts of the body where sensation predominates perception is feeble; and the reverse.

The relation of perception and sensation is closely connected with the relation of the primary and secondary qualities of matter—the primary qualities being those in which perception, or the objective element, is dominant; the secondary, those in which sensation, the subjective element, rises superior. But on this we cannot now enter.

Closely related to the doctrine of perception is that of *consciousness*, in the Hamiltonian system. It is regarded, not as a distinct faculty, but as involved in, and the basis of, all the specific faculties; co-extensive with intelligence, cognizance, knowledge. Consciousness and perception, according to this view, are not different things, but the same thing under different aspects. As in geometry the sides of the triangle suppose the angles, and the angles suppose the sides, and sides and angles are in reality indivisible from each other, while yet we think and speak of them as distinct, so in the philosophy of mind we may contemplate the same thing now under one, now under another of its aspects, distinguishing in thought and expression what in nature are one and indivisible. Thus with respect to consciousness and knowledge. To know is

to *know* that we know ; yet it is convenient to distinguish, and so we call the latter consciousness. The distinction is logical, and not psychological. So far as regards the action of the mind, to know and to know that we know are one and the same thing.

It is a singular fact, and coincides with the view now given, that until a comparatively recent date there was no term in general use to denote what we now understand by consciousness. Prior to the time of Descartes the term *conscientia* had, with few exceptions, been employed in a sense exclusively ethical, corresponding to our term "conscience." The ethical is the primitive and the psychological the derivative meaning. Thus in the various modern languages of Romaic origin, in which the ethical and the psychological ideas are expressed by the same word — as in the French, the Italian, the Spanish — the employment of these terms in a psychological sense is of recent date. Nor was it until the decline of philosophy that the Greck language appropriated a distinct term for this idea. Plato and Aristotle have no single word by which to express our knowledge of our own mental states. The term *συναισθησις*, in the sense of self-consciousness, was first introduced by the later Platonists and Aristotelians ; nor did they appropriate this term to the action of any specific faculty, but regarded it as the general attribute of intelligence.

As thus regarded, consciousness is not limited, in the Hamiltonian philosophy, to the operations of our own minds, as in self-knowledge, self-consciousness, but extends to external objects. We are conscious of the external world, no less than of our own mental states. Whatever we know or perceive, that we are

conscious of knowing or perceiving ; and to be conscious of knowing or perceiving an object is to be conscious of the *object* as known or perceived. We cannot know *that* we know without knowing *what* we know — cannot know that we remember the contents of a chapter or a volume without knowing what those contents are. To be conscious of perceiving the volume before me is to be conscious of an act of perception in distinction from all other mental acts, and also to be conscious that the object perceived is a book and not some other external object, and that it is this book and not some other one. But how can this be, if consciousness does not embrace within its sphere the object thus designated ?

The knowledge of relatives is one ; and, as all knowledge is a relation between the mind knowing and the thing known, the conception and consciousness of one of these related terms involves that of the other also ; in other words, to be conscious of the knowing is to be conscious of the thing known. So, also, the knowledge of opposites is one. To have the idea of virtue is to have the idea also of vice. To know what is short we must know what is long. But in perception, the *ego* and the *non ego*, subject and object, mind and matter, are given as opposites, and are known as such. We know them by one and the same act, one and the same faculty.

If consciousness be taken in this personal sense, as co-extensive with intelligence or knowledge, we can no longer limit it, of course, to the cognizance of what passes within our own minds. The definition which characterizes it as the faculty of self-knowledge must be set aside as too narrow. If consciousness is equivalent to knowledge in general, then it is not merely one

particular kind of knowledge, that is, knowledge of self. In the Hamiltonian sense, we are no more conscious of the *ego* than of the *non ego*, of the subject than of the object, of self than of the book and the ink-stand, as given in every act of perception — the knowledge of relatives is one; the knowledge of opposites is one. When, therefore, we find Hamilton himself, in his Lectures, laying down this “as the most general characteristic of consciousness, that it is the recognition by the thinking subject of its own acts and affections,” the inconsistency of this position with his own doctrine of consciousness, as above given, is obvious.

Consciousness implies, according to Hamilton, several things; it implies *discrimination* of one object from another. We are conscious of anything only as we discriminate that from other things — conscious of one mental state only as we distinguish it from other mental states. But to discriminate is to judge; *judgment* is therefore implied in every act of consciousness. So, also, *memory*; for we cannot discriminate and compare objects without remembering them in order to discriminate and compare. The notion of self, essential, of course, to consciousness, is the result of memory as recognizing the permanence and identity of the thinking subject. *Attention*, also, is implied in every act of consciousness, inasmuch as we cannot discriminate without attention.

Attention is, in fact, merely a modification of consciousness, according to Hamilton, and not a distinct faculty, as maintained by Reid and Stewart. It is consciousness and something more, namely, an act of will — consciousness voluntarily applied to some determinate object — consciousness concentrated.

Here, again, an apparent inconsistency presents itself; for, if attention is merely consciousness voluntarily directed to a particular object, then how can there be, as we are subsequently told there is, such a thing as involuntary attention? And if, moreover, attention is "consciousness and something more," how is it that an act of attention is necessary to every exertion of consciousness? This would seem to imply that all consciousness is consciousness and something more—that consciousness must be concentrated in order to consciousness. The inconsistency pertains, however, rather to the mode of expression than to the general doctrine.

The question whether all our mental states are objects of consciousness Hamilton decides in the negative. The mind is not always conscious, he maintains, of its own modifications. Its furniture is not all put down in the inventory which consciousness furnishes. Of this mental latency three degrees are distinguished. The first appears in the possession of certain acquired habits, as, for example, the capacity to make use of a language or a science which we are not at the moment using. "I know a science or language, not merely while I make a temporary use of it, but inasmuch as I can apply it when and how I will." The riches of the mind consist in great part in these acquired habits, and not in its present momentary activities. Nay, "the infinitely greater part of our spiritual treasures lies always beyond the sphere of consciousness, hid in the obscure recesses of the mind." The second degree of latency appears in the possession of certain systems of knowledge or habits of action, not ordinarily manifest or known to exist, but which are revealed to conscious-

ness in certain extraordinary and abnormal states of mind. Thus in delirium; somnambulism, catalepsy, and other like affections, whole systems of knowledge which have long faded out of mind come back to consciousness, as, for example, languages spoken in early youth, and the like. Facts of this class, too numerous and well authenticated to be set aside, and now generally admitted, however inexplicable, go to show that consciousness is not aware of all that exists in the mind.

The third degree of latent modification appears in certain activities and passivities occurring in the ordinary state, of which we are not directly conscious, but of whose existence we become aware by their effects. In proof of such latency we are referred to the phenomena of perception. In vision there is a certain expanse of surface which is the least that can be detected by the eye—the minimum visible. If we suppose this surface divided into two parts, neither of these two parts will by itself produce any sensible impression on the eye; and yet each of these parts must produce some impression, else the whole would produce none. So of the minimum audible; the sound of distant waves is made up of a multitude of little sounds, undistinguished by the ear, unknown to consciousness. The same is true of the other senses. The laws of association also furnish evidence of the same thing. As every one knows, it is impossible in many cases to trace the connection of thought with thought. The connecting links escape us. The truth is, they were never known to consciousness. The first and last of the series only appear, as when an ivory ball in motion impinges on a row of similar balls at rest, only the last of which is visibly affected by the impulse.



In view of this whole class of facts, Hamilton does not hesitate to maintain the somewhat startling proposition "that what we are conscious of is constructed out of what we are not conscious of; that our whole knowledge, in fact, is made up of the unknown and the incognizable." The evidence is such, he thinks, as "not merely to warrant, but to necessitate, the conclusion that the sphere of our conscious modifications is only a small circle in the centre of a far wider sphere of action and passion, of which we are only conscious through its effects."<sup>1</sup>

Without discussing the correctness of this view, it is apparent that if the term *knowledge* is properly applied to any portion of these latent modifications, the proposition that consciousness is co-extensive with knowledge requires some modification. If, for example, we may be said to "know a science or a language, not merely while they are in present use, but long after, and when we have no consciousness of any such possessions, then, in these instances at least, we know what we do not know that we know. It can no longer be maintained that "we have no knowledge of which we are not conscious." It would seem inconsistent, moreover, to deny that memory is truly and properly a knowledge of the past, on the ground that "properly speaking, we know only the actual and present," and at the same time to speak of knowing that which we do not even remember. If what is positively remembered is not, properly speaking, known, but only believed, much less that which is not remembered.

The question of mental activities and affections unknown to consciousness is one of great interest and

<sup>1</sup> Lectures, pp. 241, 242.

importance, and deserves a more thorough investigation than it has yet received at the hands of English and American psychologists, by whom, in fact, it can hardly be said to have been at all considered; while in Germany, since the time of Leibnitz who first promulgated the doctrine, and of Wolfe who ably maintained it, it has been regarded as a settled and necessary conclusion. The more recent French philosophers also adopt the same view.

We have been occupied thus far with the Hamiltonian doctrine of perception and consciousness. There are other points of interest and importance in psychology, to the elucidation of which Hamilton has contributed not a little, but which we cannot here discuss. His views on inductive, as distinguished from deductive, reasoning—indeed, his whole discussion of the processes of the elaborative faculty in judgment and reasoning—are worthy of the most careful attention. The same is true of his theory of pleasure and pain, and of his analysis and description of the sensibilities. We regard his treatment of these themes as among the most valuable of his contributions to psychology.

But we must pass without notice these and other topics, to notice the second of the principal points mentioned at the outset, the *Doctrine of the Conditioned*, or, more generally, the principle of the *relativity* and consequent *limitation* of human thought. We can hardly name a problem in philosophy more important and fundamental than this, lying deeper at the base of all systems, and giving shape to all. It raises the question, not of the value and validity of this or that process of thought, this or that mode of operation, this or that specific faculty, but of the value and validity



of knowledge itself. To ask whether human thought and knowledge are relative is to ask whether we know things as they are in themselves or only as they stand related to us the observers.

To borrow an illustration from the phenomenon of vision: To an observer stationed on some determinate portion of the earth's surface the position and movements of the heavenly bodies present a certain appearance. As he changes his position, the appearance changes. The knowledge thus obtained is evidently not an absolute, but only a relative knowledge, having relation to the position and visual power of the observer. Place him elsewhere, or modify his power of vision, and you change the whole aspect of the phenomenon. Now the question is, whether that which is true in this case of one portion of our knowledge may not be true in all cases and of all our knowledge? Do we know anything as it is *per se*? Or is all our knowledge merely phenomenal — the appearance which things present to our faculties of knowing? If the latter, then would not a modification of our faculties produce an entire change in our knowledge of things? And what evidence have we that the reality corresponds to the appearance — that the presentation given by our present faculties is a true and correct one?

How wide and fearful the sweep of this last question, and how startling the scepticism to which it points, will be evident at a glance. It brings us, so to speak, to the very edge and limit of the solid world, and bids us look off into the infinite space and deep night that lie beyond, and through which we and our little world are whirling. Another step — and we are lost!

This problem, as we have said, of the relativity of

knowledge, really underlies all our philosophy, as a single glance at the history of philosophic opinion will show. It meets us, at the outset, among the first questions that engaged the human mind in its earlier speculations. It meets us in the most recent theories and discussions of the latest contending schools. From Zenophanes to Leibnitz, from Parmenides to Schelling and Hegel, it traverses the web of philosophic thought. What is the value, what the certainty, of human knowledge? Know we realities, or appearances only — noumena, or phenomena? It was the question of the earlier Grecian schools, solved, ultimately, by those ancient thinkers in the interests of idealism and scepticism. We know but the phenomenal; things are but what they seem; man is the measure of all things. It has been the question of the German schools, from Kant to Hegel; solved here again, ultimately, in the interest of idealism and scepticism: things are but what they seem — the seeming is the reality. It has been the question of the Scotch school; affirming that while our faculties are limited, and our knowledge therefore limited by our faculties, those faculties are not the limit of existence and reality; but, while we know, and can know, merely phenomena, and not things in themselves, we are nevertheless not to regard ourselves and our faculties as the measure of all things. Such, in spirit and substance, is the teaching of Reid and Stewart in Scotland, of Jouffroy and Collard in France; and such the doctrine of Hamilton, as developed in the whole tone of his teaching, and more especially in his philosophy of the conditioned.

The doctrine of the conditioned, as it has been called, rests upon the principle that all that is conceivable in

thought lies between two extremes, which, as mutually contradictory, cannot both be true ; but of which, for the same reason, one must be true ; while, at the same time, neither of these extremes is itself conceivable. Thus, for example, we conceive *space*. It is a positive and necessary form of thought. We cannot but conceive it. But how do we conceive it? It must be either finite or infinite, of course ; for these are contradictory alternatives, of which one or the other must be true. But we cannot positively conceive, or represent to ourselves as possible, either alternative.

We cannot conceive space as bounded, finite, a whole, beyond which is no further space ; this is impossible. Nor, on the other hand, can we realize in thought the opposite extreme — the infinity of space. For, travel as far as we will in thought, we still stop short of the infinite. Here, then, are two inconceivable extremes, of which, as contradictory, one or the other must be true ; and between these inconceivable extremes lies the sphere of the conceivable. Thus it is ever and in all the relations of thought. Thus, for example, as to *time*. As we must think all things material to exist in space, so we cannot but think all things mental as well as material to exist in time : yet we can neither conceive, on the one hand, the absolute commencement of time, nor yet, on the other, can we conceive it as absolutely without limit, or beginning. Thus the conceivable lies ever between two incomprehensible extremes. This is a grand law of thought — a law of the mind ; the conceivable is bounded ever by the inconceivable ; only the limited, the conditioned, is cogitable. This law of the mind, first distinctly developed and announced as such by Hamilton, he calls the Law of the Conditioned.

It is evident that this law of mental activity is not a power, a *potency*, but an *impotency*, of the mind. It is a bound or limit, beyond which, in our thinking, we cannot go. Whatever lies beyond this limit, whatever is unconditioned, unbounded, is to us, and must ever be to us, unknown. It is the position of Hamilton that this *impotence* or imbecility of the mind, to think the unconditioned, constitutes a great negative principle, to which some of the most important mental phenomena, hitherto regarded as primary data of intelligence may be referred.

The doctrine of the conditioned, as thus laid down, has special application to the ideas of the *absolute* and *infinite*, the idea of *cause*, and the idea of *freedom*.

And first, as to the ideas of the *absolute* and *infinite*. What are the absolute and the infinite? Can we know them? Can we conceive them? From the dawn of philosophy no themes have been more frequently before the human mind or have occasioned profounder thought. To get beyond the finite and the phenomenal, to know the absolute, to comprehend the One and All, has been the aim and ambition of bold and aspiring systems, from the ancient Eleatic to the modern Eclectic. To the philosophy of the absolute, in all its forms, stands directly opposed the philosophy of the conditioned. The infinite and absolute lie beyond the bounds of possible thought and knowledge to man. They are unknowable, they are inconceivable.

The better to understand the conditions of our problem, let us see what solutions are possible. These are four, and only four. We may say: (1) That the infinite and absolute are conceivable but not knowable; or, (2) that they are knowable but not conceivable; or,

(3) that they are both knowable and conceivable ; or, (4) that they are neither knowable nor conceivable. Each of these positions has been actually maintained by one or another of the opposing schools.

The first is the position of Kant. The infinite and absolute are not objects of knowledge ; but, on the other hand, they are positive concepts, and not mere negations of the finite and the relative. A positive knowledge of the unconditioned is impossible. We know, and can know, only by means of our faculties of knowing, which thus afford the conditions of all knowledge. Now these faculties take cognizance, not of the infinite and absolute, but only of the finite and relative — the phenomenal ; in other words, not of things in themselves, but only of things as relative to us. The former lie wholly beyond the sphere of our operations.

This strikes at the root, of course, of all purely speculative and *a priori* systems, whether of psychology, theology, or ontology. Rational psychology and transcendental philosophy are, at once, impossible and absurd. We are shut up, positively and strictly, to the sphere of the relative and phenomenal, the sphere of consciousness. Thus Kant, though often regarded as the grand apostle of the transcendental school, in reality subverts the whole system, by showing all knowledge of anything beyond the finite and relative to be impossible. It is the very object of the Critique of Pure Reason to analyze human knowledge as to its fundamental conditions, and determine its proper sphere. The result is a declaration that the knowledge of the unconditioned is impossible.

But while unknowable the infinite is not inconceivable. We form notions or ideas of that which lies

beyond the bounds of knowledge, the illimitable, the absolute. These ideas have not, indeed, any objective reality. Nay, they involve us in contradictions from which we can find no escape. Still they are conceptions and not mere negations — positive concepts ; and it is the specific province of reason (*vernunft*), in distinction from understanding (*verstand*), to furnish these ideas. The reason, as thus employed — pure reason — is not, however, to be relied upon as a faculty of positive knowledge. As such it is wholly illusory, conversant with phantoms, not with realities. It is not until we emerge from the domain of *pure* reason, and set ourselves to inquire of *practical* reason, that we can have evidence of the reality of the objects to which these ideas relate.

The tendency of such a system could only be to scepticism. If the pure reason is illusory, how shall we trust the practical ? If the ideas of God, the soul, freedom, and immortality, are not to be taken as realities when given by the former, how shall we establish the existence of the same upon the authority of the latter ? If the data of the one are mere laws of thought and not of things, how do we know that it is not so with the other ?

This tendency is still further strengthened by the arbitrary limitation of space and time to the sphere of sense in the Kantian system. We think under the conditions of space and time ; thus we perceive and know all things ; but we are not to infer that the objects of our knowledge are, in reality, what we conceive them to be ; for space and time are not laws of things but only of our thinking. If so, then when we come into the sphere of the practical reason or conscience,



and find ourselves there under the law of moral obligation, viewing this as right and that as wrong, what right have we to affirm that this also is not merely a law of thought rather than a law of things? What, then, becomes of our so-called eternal and immutable morality?

Nor was this system terminative of the controversy; on the contrary it contained within itself the germ of a higher transcendentalism, and a more thorough-going philosophy of the absolute than any that had preceded. In the words of Hamilton, "he had slain the body, but had not exorcised the spectre of the absolute; and this spectre has continued to haunt the schools of Germany even to the present day."

The second is the position of Schelling and the school of metaphysicians represented by him, who held to the direct apprehension of truths which lie beyond the sphere of sense and of experience, by a capacity of knowledge which is above the understanding and above consciousness, and which they call the power of *intellectual intuition*. By sinking back into the depths of the soul itself, back of all sense-perception, all reasoning, all reflection, all consciousness, the mind has the power, according to these illuminati, of perceiving truth *per se* — things as they are in themselves — the unconditioned, the infinite and absolute, God, matter, soul. These objects cannot, it is true, be conceived by the mind, for they lie beyond the sphere of the understanding; and the attempt to bring them within that sphere involves us, at once, in difficulties and absurdities; we can conceive only the conditioned. But though not capable of being conceived, they may be known by this higher power of immediate intuition. Thus, alone, is philos-

ophy possible ; for as the science of sciences, it is and must be the science of the absolute.

As thus endowed, and in the exercise of this higher power, the mind becomes identified with the absolute itself ; the distinction of subject and object, of the knowing and the known, vanishes ; reason and the absolute, man and the infinite, are one.

The third position is a modification or combination of the two previous. The infinite and absolute are objects of knowledge, as with Schelling, and also objects of conception, as with Kant. This is the view of Cousin, the view so ably refuted by Hamilton in the article on the Philosophy of the Conditioned, to which we referred at the beginning. It is the peculiarity of the theory of Schelling, as already stated, that the infinite and absolute are known by a power above consciousness and superior to the understanding, in the operation of which all distinction of subject and object is lost, the mind knowing and the object known — reason and the absolute — becoming one. Hence, while known to the reason, the objects of this power are incomprehensible to the understanding, which can know only by consciousness and discrimination of differences. With Cousin, on the other hand, the infinite and absolute are known, not by any such indescribable, extraordinary, and paradoxical process, but by the ordinary method of consciousness, which, it is admitted, is implied in all intelligence and under the conditions of plurality and difference, which are the necessary conditions of all knowledge. As thus known to consciousness and by the ordinary methods of intelligence, the infinite and absolute may be conceived as well as known.



In opposition to all these stands the fourth position — that of Hamilton, as already explained: We know, and can know, only the conditioned, the relative, the finite. All thought conditions its object in the very act of thinking. To think is to limit. The infinite and absolute are not positive conceptions, but mere negations of the finite and relative. They cannot be positively conceived or construed to the mind. The effort to conceive them involves the abstraction of the very conditions which are essential to thought itself. We cannot, for example, conceive an absolute whole, that is, a whole so great that it cannot be itself conceived as part of a still greater whole; nor can we conceive an absolute part, that is, a part so small that it cannot be itself conceived as made up of parts. As an absolute maximum and an absolute minimum are each and equally unthinkable, in other words, the *absolutely bounded*, so neither can we think the *infinitely unbounded*; for to follow out in thought, on the one hand, the ever-widening and growing whole until it shall have passed all bounds, and stand revealed to thought as the pure infinite, or, on the other hand, to follow out the ever-progressing division into parts smaller and still smaller, until in this direction also all bounds are passed, and the infinite is actually reached, would in either case require an infinite process of thought and an infinite time for that process. Thus neither the absolute nor the infinite, the positively limited nor the positively unlimited, can possibly be construed to thought or represented to the imagination.

To this Schelling would reply: True, the understanding cannot comprehend the infinite and absolute; it knows only as it knows conditions and relations, only

by comparing and distinguishing and apprehending the differences and relations of objects. The absolute is one, complete, out of relation to any other object—cannot therefore be known by plurality and difference and relation, as the understanding knows. But there is a higher faculty than the understanding; knowledge may transcend consciousness. To the higher reason stand revealed the infinite, the absolute, pure truth, things as they are in themselves. This cannot be comprehended by the understanding, for it lies beyond the sphere of that power; it comes not within the consciousness, for consciousness supposes the distinction of subject and object—the mind knowing and the thing known; while in the cognizance of the infinite this distinction vanishes, and the reason stands face to face with truth, nay, is one with the absolute. As exercising this divine faculty, man becomes one with God.

It is a sufficient answer to this purely fanciful hypothesis to inquire how it is that we become aware of possessing and exercising so remarkable a faculty. Of course, we are not conscious of it; for by the supposition it lies wholly beyond the sphere of consciousness. How, then, do we know it? For, if not known at the time when it is called into exercise, how can it be remembered afterward? We remember only that of which we have been conscious.

If now Cousin and his followers seek to escape this difficulty by so modifying the theory of Schelling as to bring the knowledge of the absolute within the sphere of consciousness, it is only to fall into the contradiction of affirming that we know by the laws of the understanding that which can by no possibility come under those laws. The absolute is the complete, the universal; and

as such it is absolutely one; to affirm it is to deny all plurality and difference. But we know by consciousness and intelligence only as we distinguish subject and object, only as we discover plurality and difference. To know the absolute, then, by consciousness and the understanding, is to know that which is absolutely one by discovering in it plurality and difference; in other words, by discovering it to be what it is not.

Such, in substance, is the inexorable logic with which this remorseless antagonist pursues, through all space and beyond the habitable bounds of thought, the chimaera of the possible knowledge, or even the possible conception, of the infinite and absolute.<sup>1</sup>

The application of this philosophy of the conditioned to theology, as regards especially our ideas of the Supreme Being, is at once obvious and of the highest importance. As infinite and absolute, the God whom we worship is beyond the power of the human mind to comprehend or adequately conceive. "We must believe in the infinity of God; but the infinite God cannot by us, in the present limitation of our faculties, be comprehended or conceived. A deity understood would be no deity at all; and it is blasphemy to say that God only is as we are able to think him to be. We know God according to the finitude of our faculties; but we believe much that we are incompetent properly to know."<sup>2</sup> A God understood would be no God. He can be known only so far as he reveals himself; known relatively, not absolutely and as he is in himself; and he can reveal himself only to and through the faculties with which he has seen fit to endow us. The limit of our faculties is the limit of all possible

<sup>1</sup> See note (B.) at the end of this Article.

<sup>2</sup> Lectures, p. 581.

revelation of God to us. By no process of revelation can the finite be made to comprehend the absolute and the infinite. The drop can neither contain nor comprehend the ocean.

But has not God revealed himself to us as infinite and absolute? He has made known to us the fact that he is so — a fact which it needs no special revelation to teach, since reason assures us that a finite God is no God; but in making known to us the fact, he has not brought the infinite and absolute within our comprehension. Reason and revelation both assure us that God is infinite; but they do not enable us to comprehend or grasp in thought the contents of that infinite. We know *that* God is; but *what* he is we do not and cannot fully comprehend. We know that he is *not* finite, *not* dependent, but unlimited and absolute; but how much is positively comprised under these negatives we cannot determine. It requires infinity to conceive infinity. Hence — and it is a significant fact — those who claim for man a knowledge of the infinite, have done so, usually, on the ground that the reason in man is part of and one with the divine reason, as Cousin; or, still higher, that man is one and the same with the absolute, as Schelling.

This doctrine of the conditioned may be styled the philosophy of ignorance rather than of wisdom; a *nescience* rather than a *science* of God. But it is an ignorance which is itself the highest wisdom; for, as Hamilton has well said, “the highest reach of human science is the scientific recognition of human ignorance: ‘Qui nescit ignorare, ignorat scire.’” Well may we say with Grotius, “nescire quaedam magna pars sapientiae est,” and with Scaliger, “sapientia est vera, nolle

nimis sapere." Such has been the testimony of the most learned and devout, from Chrysostom and Augustine downward. "There are two sorts of ignorance," says Hamilton; "we philosophize to escape ignorance, and the consummation of our philosophy is ignorance; we start from the one, we repose in the other; they are the goals from which and to which we tend; and the pursuit of knowledge is but a course between two ignorances, as human life is itself only a travelling from grave to grave."<sup>1</sup>

A theology constructed on such principles and on such a basis must evidently be one of pre-eminent modesty and humility. It sets out with a confession of ignorance, and ends with a demonstration of the principle from which it sets out. It is a philosophy which "vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up." The God whom it recognizes, and whom it worships, is a God incomprehensible, and past finding out; a God that hideth himself; whom no man hath seen or can see; dwelling in the light that no man can approach unto. The spirit of such a theology is one of deepest reverence and humility. Its language is, "Who, by searching, can find out God; who can find out the Almighty to perfection? Lo, these are parts of his ways; but the thunder of his power who can understand?"

There are two lessons specially taught by the philosophy of the conditioned, as applied to theology; one is the impossibility of constructing, *a priori*, by reason alone, a science of God; since, start from what point we will, we find ourselves baffled and thrown back in every attempt to approach the infinite; and that not by accident, but of necessity, from the demonstrated nature and

<sup>1</sup> Wight's Philosophy of Sir Wm. Hamilton, p. 517.

laws of human thought. The other is, that the difficulties which we find in theology belong equally to philosophy — are not peculiar to religion alone, nor to one system of religious belief exclusively, nor to revealed in distinction from natural theology, but to all systems alike, and to philosophy as much as to theology. If theology cannot tell us what God is in himself, but only as relative to our limited faculties, neither can philosophy tell us what *anything* is in itself, but only as relative to our faculties of knowing. If theology cannot explain to our comprehension everything which it would have us believe; philosophy, too, requires us to take upon trust more than it can demonstrate, and to believe what we cannot understand. If theology recognizes in its divinity, a Being whom it cannot comprehend; philosophy has never yet found herself able to frame a conception of Deity that was self-consistent, not to say adequate and complete; and that for the same reason in either case — the inability of the human mind to form such a conception.

It has been objected to this philosophy that it makes the infinite a mere *negation*, thus ignoring and abolishing the highest object of thought to man. This is not so. It is not the infinite, but only our *conception* of the infinite which it pronounces negative. It is not the infinite, but only our *comprehension* of the infinite which it denies. That the infinite is, we know — *that* it is; but not *what* it is: every attempt to conceive it, lands us in a mere negation of the limited. The following passage from Mansel well expresses the truth as to this point: “When we lift up our eyes to that blue vault of heaven, which is, itself, but the limit of our power of sight, we are compelled to suppose though



we cannot perceive, the existence of space beyond as well as within it; we regard the boundary of vision as parting the visible from the invisible. And when in mental contemplation we are conscious of relation and difference as the limits of our power of thought, we regard them in like manner as the boundary between the conceivable and the inconceivable; though we are unable to penetrate in thought beyond the nether sphere to the unrelated and unlimited which it hides from us. The *absolute* and the *infinite* are thus, like the *inconceivable* and the *imperceptible*, names indicating, not an object of thought or of consciousness at all, but the mere absence of the conditions under which consciousness is possible. The attempt to construct, in thought, an object answering to such names, necessarily results in contradiction; a contradiction, however, which we have ourselves produced by the attempt to think; which exists in the act of thought, but not beyond it; which destroys the conception as such, but indicates nothing concerning the existence or non-existence of that which we try to conceive. It proves our own impotence, and it proves nothing more. Or, rather, it indirectly leads us to believe in the existence of that infinite which we cannot conceive; for the denial of its existence includes a contradiction no less than the assertion of its conceivability. We thus learn that the provinces of reason and faith are not co-extensive; that it is a duty, enjoined by reason itself, to believe in that which we are unable to comprehend."<sup>1</sup>

It is objected to this philosophy that it leaves unreconciled the difficulties and contradictions which it finds in the attempt to conceive of the infinite; thus

<sup>1</sup> Limits of Religious Thought, p. 110.

leaving reason and faith at hopeless variance. It allows the mind to fall back baffled and thwarted in every effort to form a consistent notion of the highest and most important objects of thought, and calls in faith to decide where reason is impotent.

That it presents difficulties which it does not solve is true ; that it shows them to be inseparable from every attempt of the human mind to conceive the unconditioned is also true. It leaves them unsolved ; but it shows them to be insolvable, and it tells us why they are so. But is any other system preferable in this respect ? Is it in the power of a different philosophy to remove the discrepancies and solve the difficulties of which it complains ? Suppose, with the disciples of a different school, we call in the aid of a higher power, which we call the reason, and place above the understanding and in contrast with it, whose office and province it shall be to take cognizance of those higher truths which the logical understanding finds it impossible to comprehend. Have we thus got rid of the difficulties ? Are the contradictions reconciled ? Can we now understand the infinite, and comprehend the absolute ? Can we now conceive infinite duration, or yet the absolute beginning or absolute termination of existence ? Is it not just as difficult and impossible as before to comprehend or conceive these things ? Is it not evident that this new and higher power which we call the reason stands in precisely the same relation to the understanding and the other mental faculties that faith does in the other system ? “ The logical understanding is out of its sphere when it undertakes to grasp the higher truth,” says the transcendentalist ; “ that is the province of *reason* ; hence difficulties and



contradictions." "The human intelligence is out of its sphere when it undertakes to grasp the unconditioned," says Hamilton; "that is the province of *faith*; hence difficulties and contradictions." The question is now, which of these two shall charge the other with leaving difficulties and contradictions unreconciled? In either system there is presented to the mind what it is admitted we cannot understand. In the one case it is presented as an object of knowledge; in the other, of faith.

And how is this higher faculty of reason to know what it is out of the power of the logical understanding to conceive? Is it a power above consciousness? Then how do we know that we have such a power? If within the sphere of consciousness, then it is, of course, subject to the laws of consciousness; it must be governed in its operation by the ordinary laws of thought. Thought has its fixed laws, and in all our thinking we must and do observe them. Take the idea of the infinite, which is claimed as the special prerogative and province of reason. Is it not a thought, a conception? And as such, is it not subject to the laws which govern all our thinking? Can we, for example, conceive the infinite to be and not to be at the same time? Or can we conceive that it neither is, nor yet is not? And what have we here but the principles of *contradiction and excluded middle, which are laws of the logical understanding*? Is it not evident that if we think at all we must think in accordance with these laws? Yet the logical understanding, we are told, is wholly out of its sphere when it undertakes to grasp the infinite. Pray how is the reason to make known to us, then, this *terra incognita*? Is this higher fac-

ulty so above and in contrast with the understanding as to set aside the universal and fixed laws of thought? But it is precisely these laws that create the difficulty and impossibility of conceiving the infinite and absolute.

To revert to the original objection, that faith and reason are left at variance by the doctrine of the conditioned. It should be remarked that the discrepancy is not between faith and reason, but between reason and reason, between one conception and another of the human mind. The difficulty is not how to believe what we cannot adequately comprehend, but how to reconcile our disagreeing conceptions; how to reconcile our idea of God as a being and a person with our idea of him as infinite; how to conceive of him as absolute, and yet as cause; how to conceive of the infinite as distinct from and co-existing with the finite, yet not limited by it. These, and such as these, are the difficulties; and they are difficulties which the reason (so called) does not escape, nor the philosophy of the absolute, in any of its forms, help us to solve.

But the difficulty, it is further objected, is the same for faith as for the intellect; for the faculty of believing as for the faculty of knowing and conceiving. If we cannot know nor even conceive the infinite, then we certainly cannot believe it; since it is impossible to believe what we have no conception of. True, we reply, we cannot believe what we have *no* conception of; but we may and do believe what we do not comprehend, and what we have no *positive* conception of. I believe in the immortality of the soul; but exactly what that immortality comprises I do not know. I may believe that a given object, *a*, possesses an unknown quality, *x*, and yet of the value of *x* I may

have no conception whatever. I believe that space is infinite; but I do not and cannot conceive what the infinite comprises, nor represent to myself infinite space as a positive object of thought. My conception of it is merely negative — it is the *unlimited*, the non-finite.

The precise relation of faith to understanding in the philosophy of the conditioned seems to be misapprehended in some cases: one, at least, of the recent reviewers has represented that philosophy as placing the foundations of our faith in the processes of the logical understanding. This is entirely a misapprehension. Our belief of the divine existence is not, in that system, made to rest upon the logical fact that, of two contradictions one must be true, and therefore there must be an infinite or an absolute, neither of which can, however, be conceived. This is not made the foundation of our faith, but is simply brought in as confirmatory of it, as showing that philosophy has nothing, at least, to say against it. Our faith is uniformly represented as resting on entirely another basis, viz. on the religious consciousness, the moral nature of man. The consciousness of dependence, the consciousness of moral obligation, the consciousness that we are actually living under a law, and that where there is law there is and must be a lawgiver — these are the grand facts of man's moral nature; and they constitute the actual and sufficient foundation of his faith in the existence of a Supreme Being. To this faith scepticism may object: You believe in that which you cannot conceive. To this philosophy replies: True; but you are obliged to believe many things which you cannot conceive; and then, again, the opposite of what you believe is equally inconceivable. If you cannot

conceive God as infinite, neither can you conceive him as finite. If you cannot conceive him as without beginning of days or end of years, neither can you conceive him as beginning to exist or as ceasing to be. If you cannot conceive absolute creation, neither can you conceive an infinite series of finite changes. Yet of these two opposites, one *must* be true. Philosophy thus confirms our belief, by showing that reason can bring no valid objection against it. It removes obstacles, and leaves the coast clear for the operations of the higher and positive principle of faith.

The principles thus maintained by Hamilton, in what has been termed the philosophy of the conditioned, are assumed by Professor Mansel, in his celebrated Bampton Lectures, as the basis and starting-point of his treatise. Planting himself on these principles he proceeds to carry them out to their legitimate results, as against rationalism in its various forms, sceptic and dogmatic, which would make reason the arbiter of revelation ; or, setting aside revelation altogether, would construct from the principles of reason alone a pure and *a priori* science of God. He shows that the pretensions of such a system are altogether baseless and absurd ; that reason has no such knowledge of the divine nature as can constitute the foundation of an independent or rational theology ; that, on the contrary, its fundamental principles and conceptions are self-contradictory and irreconcilable with each other ; and that from the very nature of the human mind, its inability to conceive the unconditioned, this must be the case. The fundamental conceptions of any system of rationalistic theology are, and must be, the notion of the absolute, the infinite and first cause. These it must combine in its concep-

tion of Deity. He must be infinite, that is, free from all possible limitation; he must be absolute, that is, existing in and by himself, without necessary relation to any other being; he must be first cause, that is, the producer of all things—himself produced of none. But how are these three elements or notions to be combined? Are they not incongruous? Cause is always relative to effect; the absolute, on the contrary, is that which is out of all relation. How is the absolute to pass over into the relative, the infinite to give rise to the finite? And how can the finite and the infinite co-exist? Pantheism or atheism is the logical and inevitable result: the one sacrificing the finite to save the infinite; the other, the infinite to save the finite. But even here we find no resting place; for if we deny the existence of the finite, we deny our own existence, and what then becomes of all our reasoning? If we deny the infinite, we find it equally impossible to conceive the absolute beginning in time, or absolute limitation in space, if the finite. Thus, from whatever side it may be viewed, the rationalistic conception of the infinite is seen to be encompassed with contradictions. We can neither, without contradiction, conceive it to exist, nor not to exist; as one, nor yet as many; as personal, nor yet as impersonal; as conscious, nor as unconscious; as producing effects, nor as inactive. The conclusion is, that reason is incompetent, of herself, to construct a theology, and is not to be taken as the guide and determiner of faith. Foiled thus in the attempt to grasp the absolute nature of the Divine Being, Professor Mansel proceeds to show, by an examination of the nature and laws of the human mind, whence the failure results, and why every such attempt necessarily

must prove a failure: that thought is not, and cannot be, the measure of existence; that the contradictions which meet us at every step in the endeavor to conceive the infinite arise, not from the nature of the object which we seek to conceive, but from the constitution of the mind conceiving.

Thought is possible only by means of definite conceptions. All thought is, by its very nature, a *limitation*; all knowledge or consciousness implies limitation. It is the apprehension or conception of a thing in some one definite form or aspect; of something in particular, and not of things in general. It is the determination of the mind to one actual, out of many possible, modifications. But the infinite is not to be shut up within these limits. The infinite is the wholly *unlimited*. Of course, then, we cannot possibly conceive it. To speak of knowing or conceiving the infinite is to speak of defining, bounding, limiting the *unlimited*. Nor can the absolute be conceived without equal contradiction. Any object of thought, as conceived, stands in relation to the mind that conceives; is brought into that relation by the very act of conception. But the absolute is that which is out of all relation. When conceived, or brought into relation, it is no longer absolute. It does not follow from this that the absolute and infinite do not exist, but only that we cannot conceive them as existing.<sup>1</sup>

All human knowledge or consciousness, again, is subject to the law of time, under the forms of succession and duration. Whatever object or existence we are conscious of, we are conscious of as succeeding in time

<sup>1</sup> See note (C.) at the end of this Article.



to some former object of thought or knowledge, and as itself occupying time; nor can we conceive it otherwise. But that which is successive is finite, limited by that which has gone before and that which is coming after. And that which is continuous is also finite; for continuous existence is existence divisible into successive moments made up of successive portions, each, of course, finite. It follows that, unless we can escape this law of thought, and for once think *out* of time, no object of human thought can adequately represent the true nature of an infinite Being. Hence it is, also, that we cannot conceive or construe to thought an act of *creation*, in the strict sense of the term — an 'absolutely-first link in the chain of existence, an absolutely first moment or beginning of anything in time, nor yet of time itself. On the other hand, an infinite succession in time is equally inconceivable. We can neither conceive an infinite duration of finite changes, nor yet an existence prior to duration?

Personality, also, implies limitation. All our notions of personality are derived from our own, which is relative and limited. The thought and the thinker are relative to each other, and are distinguished from each other. A person is a definite object, one being out of many. "To speak of an absolute and infinite person, is simply to use language to which, however true it may be in a superhuman sense, no mode of human thought can possibly attach itself" (p. 103). Whatever we separate in thought from other things, and distinguish from other objects, becomes to us, by that very act, a *definite* object, limited, conditioned; and to apply to any such object the term *infinite* is to affirm and deny in the same breath. We cannot apply the term, there-

fore, to any definite and positive object of thought. To say that any object or attribute or form is infinite, is to say that the same thing, at one and the same moment, is both finite and infinite.

Shall we then, with the pantheist, deny the personality of God ; or, with the atheist, his infinity ? By no means, either. We must think him personal ; we must think him infinite. True, we cannot reconcile the two representations ; but the impossibility and apparent contradiction may not exist anywhere but in our own minds ; they do not necessarily pertain to the nature of God. “ The apparent contradiction in this case, as in those previously noticed, is the necessary consequence of an attempt on the part of the human thinker to transcend the boundaries of his consciousness. It proves that there are limits to man’s power of thought ; and it proves no more ” (p. 106).

The work of Professor Mansel has awakened attention and called forth criticism in no ordinary degree. It has been reviewed, sometimes sharply, sometimes vaguely, seldom with approbation — sometimes with, but oftener apparently *without*, a clear perception of the design of the treatise and the principles on which it is based — in most of the quarterlies, the leading secular and religious journals, and in special treatises. We have to do with the work, at this time, only in so far as it is founded upon, and a development of, *the philosophy of the conditioned*, in its application to theology. Whatever may be the special merits or defects of Professor Mansel’s treatise, we cannot but regard the principles on which it is based as fundamentally correct, and of the highest importance to theology as well as to philosophy. The philosophy of the absolute — the dream that by reason



alone, independently of revelation, man can find out God, can find out the Almighty to perfection; that the mind of man is capable of comprehending, not phenomena only, but things as they are in themselves; of transcending the limits which consciousness and the laws of thought impose, and conversing, face to face, with unveiled truth and the most august realities — this philosophy, in one or another of its several forms, lies at the basis of the most prevalent and most dangerous errors in science and in religion. It is the essence of rationalism, the root of pantheism, of scepticism, and infidelity. These false systems can be met only by a return to first principles, a careful searching out, and building upon, the right foundation in philosophy. We may discard metaphysical speculation as much as we please; but the thinking world will continue to speculate, and on its false theories of philosophy will build false systems of religious belief, which we can successfully encounter only by showing that the foundations on which they rest are radically false. To do this in respect to the errors named we must fall back upon the philosophy of the conditioned.

Many of the objections which have been brought against the treatise of Professor Mansel are such as lie against the philosophy of the conditioned in general; and, as such, have been already considered. It has been urged, however, and with apparent force, against this work, by those who would probably accept in the main the principles of that philosophy, that it is based upon a false idea of what the infinite really denotes. In the sense in which it is employed by Professor Mansel, the term *infinite* stands for the *absolutely unlimited*. The reasoning proceeds on that postulate.

But while it is easy to show that we cannot conceive of God as infinite in that sense, since to conceive is, with us, to distinguish one thing from another, and that is to limit, in our thought, the object conceived, it does not follow that in some other sense (the sense commonly attached to the term) we may not be able to conceive of him.

Whatever may be the strict philosophical meaning of the term *infinite*, it is evident that in its common theological use, as applied to Deity, we employ it in a sense different from that now mentioned. To call any being or thing infinite, in the sense of wholly unlimited, is to bring together contradictory ideas; for a being or thing is a limited object, one out of, or in distinction from, many; something definite, and therefore the opposite of the infinite. Yet we do and must think and speak of God as infinite. What do we understand, then, by the term as thus employed? Not, surely, the sum of all existence, the  $\tau\acute{o}\ \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu$  or  $\tau\acute{o}\ \acute{o}\lambda\omicron\nu$ , the absolute whole of things; but, on the contrary, a Being who, *out of himself*, finds no limits; none save such as his own being and nature necessarily suppose; none save those implied in the very term and idea of being. We mean that his duration is unlimited, his power unlimited, his every attribute and perfection unlimited; in a word, that there is none greater, and that he himself cannot be greater by the addition of any quality or attribute which he does not already possess. This is the idea we form of God when we think of him and speak of him as infinite; and in this there is involved no contradiction. Still our thought, even in the modified sense now given, is not a positive, but only a negative conception: we do not represent to ourselves

as a positive object of thought, much less do we comprehend, this infinity of the Divine Being. We approach it only by negations, and we express it accordingly. We cannot positively think the infinite, but we can refuse to think the finite; and this we do when we say God is infinite.

In the sense now intended, we can apply the term *infinite* to God without any contradiction; can speak and think of him as a Being, for he is a Being; as a Person, for he is a Person; can distinguish him, in thought, from other beings and things, from the created worlds, from Gabriel, from Satan, for he is distinct; can conceive him, therefore, as a definite, personal existence, possessing intellect, sensibilities, and will. Now, in the strict philosophical sense all these terms and conceptions are so many limitations and conditions; and, as such, are contradictory of the infinite; but in the sense commonly attached to that term they involve no such contradiction.

It must be remarked, in justification of the use which Mr. Mansel makes of the term, that it is the sense in which it is employed in the several systems which he is combating, and therefore very naturally and properly thus employed by him. In the rational and transcendental schemes which claim for man the power to know the infinite, and the absolute, these terms (not distinguished and contrasted, as with Hamilton) denote the wholly unlimited and unrelated — the sum of all reality. This is the sense attached to the terms by Kant, Wolfe, Spinoza, Hegel, and the rationalists generally. "The metaphysical representation of the Deity as absolute and infinite must necessarily, as the profoundest metaphysicians have acknowledged, amount to

nothing less than the sum of all reality : ‘ What kind of an absolute being is that,’ says Hegel, ‘ which does not contain in itself all that is actual, even evil included ? ’ ”.

Now it is certainly competent for a critic to hold those whose opinions he controverts to their own use of terms, and that strictly ; and to show that, employing the terms as they do in the present instance, it is impossible to the human mind to form any conception of God as infinite and absolute. As against the systems of rational theology based on the philosophy of the absolute, which he was controverting, we regard the argument of Professor Mansel as valid. Taking their own definitions, he shows that it is impossible for man to conceive of the infinite and absolute in the way they intend ; and that every attempt to do this leads to inevitable confusion and absurdity.

The philosophy of the conditioned has been thus far considered with special reference to the ideas of the infinite and absolute. It applies, also, to the idea of *cause*. But here we must be brief. We are under the necessity of thinking, not merely that any given event that may come under our notice has a cause, but that *every* event has, and *must* have one. This we call the law of causality. We cannot represent to ourselves the possibility of the opposite : the occurrence of any event whatever without a cause. But why, and whence, this peculiarity of mental action ? Is it an express and positive datum of intelligence that every event must have a cause ; or is it merely the result of our inability to think the unconditioned ? The former is the usual answer ; Hamilton affirms the latter.

“ We cannot know, we cannot think a thing, except

under the attribute of *existence*; we cannot know or think a thing to exist, except as in *time*; and we cannot know or think a thing to exist in time, and think it *absolutely to commence*. Now this at once imposes on us the judgment of causality.

"An object is presented to our observation which has phenomenally begun to be. But we cannot construe it to thought that the object, that is, *this determinate complement of existence*, had no being at any past moment; because, in that case, once thinking it as existent, we should, again, think it as non-existent, which is, for us, impossible. What, then, can we do—must we do? That the phenomenon presented to us did, *as a phenomenon*, begin to be, this we know by experience; but that the elements of its existence only began when the phenomenon which they constitute came into manifested being, this we are wholly unable to think. In these circumstances, how do we proceed? There is for us only one possible way: we are compelled to believe that the object (that is, the certain grade and quantum of being), whose phenomenal rise into existence we have witnessed, did really exist prior to this rise under other forms. But to say that a thing previously existed under different forms is only to say, in other words, that *a thing had causes*"<sup>1</sup>

According to this view all apparent commencement of existence must be conceived as merely the evolution of being out of some previous into some new form or mode of existence, the whole quantum of being remaining as before. We can neither conceive the absolute creation nor the absolute annihilation of any form or atom of existence; cannot conceive an atom absolutely

<sup>1</sup> Discussions, 581-583.

added to, or absolutely taken from, existence in general. "We are able to conceive, indeed, the creation of the world; this, indeed, as easily as the creation of an atom. But what is our thought of creation? It is not a thought of the mere springing of nothing into something. On the contrary, creation is conceived, and is by us conceivable, only as the evolution of existence from possibility into actuality by the fiat of the Deity. Let us place ourselves, in imagination, at its very crisis. Now can we construe it to thought that the moment after the universe flashed into material reality, into manifested being, there was a larger complement of existence in the universe and its Author together than the moment before there subsisted in the Deity alone? This we are unable to imagine. And what is true of our concept of creation holds of our concept of annihilation. We can think no real annihilation, no absolute sinking of something into nothing."<sup>1</sup>

To this view of causality, several objections occur. Not to mention the *apparently* pantheistic nature of the theory of creation thus presented, Deity being the sum of existence, and evolving from himself the material universe, so that what is now diffused in space, under the various forms of matter, was once virtually contained in him, who is thus the One and All of the ancient philosophies: it may be questioned whether the theory, even if conceded, furnishes a complete explanation of the law of causality. It accounts for the apparent production of existence, but not for the occurrence of change; whereas, the law of causality applies to all *change* of being, and not merely to the production of being. The apparent production is resolved into change,

<sup>1</sup> Discussions, p. 582.



and the difficulty is thus thrown back one step; but how shall we account for this change? This, too, requires a cause. The ice which presents itself to day where was water yesterday is no new existence, we are told, but only the same thing under another form. This we can readily believe. But how came the transformation? What produced the change? An oak stands to-day, towering in its majesty and strength, where once an acorn fell. A process of evolution and development has been slowly going on there for a century. Taking to itself whatsoever it needed of carbon, oxygen, or other element, from earth, air, water, and the sunbeam, this little germ has evolved, and built itself up into the stately form before us. There is no new material there, nothing which did not, under some other form, previously exist. But whence, we instinctively ask, originated this mysterious process of evolution, and what set it on foot? This is the real question of causality in the case. It is no answer to this question to say that the elements which now compose the tree previously existed under some other form; that all apparent beginning is merely evolution of being: the evolution is the very thing to be accounted for.

Again, it may be objected to this theory, that to resolve the law of causality into mere impotence of thought seems to leave open to question the validity of that law, and of the conclusions based upon it. It is a weakness of our minds that leads us to conceive that every event must have a cause; it is because we cannot think the absolute beginning of anything. If it were not for that, if we could but construe it to thought that the apparent commencement of existence is a real beginning, there would be no necessity for this so-called



law. Now it *may be* that this impotence of the human faculties is not the measure and standard of reality. The fact that we cannot *conceive* the absolute commencement in time of any portion of existence does not prove such a commencement impossible, since, by the very philosophy of the conditioned, some things are conceded to be true which we cannot conceive; nay, we find it equally impossible to think the counter proposition of infinite duration, which we must maintain if one hold to a first Cause of all things, or even to an infinite series of determined causes. Does our inability to conceive infinite duration prove that also to be impossible? If so, what becomes of our law of causality?

And this leads us to remark that we fail to perceive any reason for the choice of alternative, so far as this theory of causality is concerned. The alternative is the absolute commencement or infinite non-commencement of existence. Existence takes its rise in time, causeless, groundless, springing from nothing into being. or else in some form it has always been. The question is, which? One or the other of these counter propositions is and must be true. The former is inconceivable, says Hamilton: we cannot think existence out of being, in either direction, future or past; cannot think that which has actual existence to have ever had absolutely no existence in any form; and so we conclude the latter to be the true supposition. But is the latter any less inconceivable? Can we more easily construe it to thought that a thing shall always have existed than that it shall begin to exist? Can we conceive infinite duration? By the very first principles of the philosophy of the conditioned, we cannot. Why, then, should

we reject the first form of the alternative on the ground of its inconceivability, rather than the other, on the same ground? Why is it that, practically, all men decide in favor of the latter of the two counter propositions, both and equally inconceivable? There must be a reason for this universal decision of the human mind. Logic can show no reason—she declares that one or the other must be true; but which she knows not, cares not. It is extra-logical, purely psychological, this uniform and universal choice of alternative. The theory which resolves causality into the inability to conceive the unconditioned seems to us to leave unexplained this great psychological fact.

With all deference to the authority of Sir William Hamilton, and while fully accepting the philosophy of the conditioned in its general principles, we question its applicability to the law of cause. If, however, it is thus applied, would it not have been more in accordance with his own system, and with the demands of the argument, to have presented it in a somewhat modified form? We can neither conceive the absolute commencement, nor yet the infinite non-commencement, that is, infinite duration, of existence; yet, by the law of excluded middle, one or the other of these contradictory propositions must be true. Being must absolutely commence, or being, in some form, must always have existed. In this dilemma observation comes to our aid, and assures us that the apparent beginnings which take place around us, and which at first would seem to favor the supposition of absolute commencement of existence, are invariably grounded in something lying back of, and giving rise to, these changes; look where we will, we find no such thing as absolute

beginning, but always and everywhere the reverse ; and thus the scale which, in the hand of simple logic, had hung in even balance turns now in favor of the proposition, that being, in some form, must always have existed ; in other words, that nothing is uncaused.

The philosophy of the conditioned is applied, also, to the idea of *freedom*. Few words must here suffice. Inasmuch as we cannot conceive the absolute commencement of anything, independent, that is, of all previous existence, we cannot, consequently, conceive a cause not itself caused. The will is regarded as a cause ; but, for the reason just stated, it cannot be conceived as an original independent or free cause, a cause which is not itself an effect ; for this would be to conceive an absolute origination. But a cause which is conditioned, determined to its action by other causes or influences, is not a free cause, or a free will. Freedom is, therefore, inconceivable. But so, likewise, is its opposite, necessity ; for it is equally impossible to conceive an infinite non-commencement, an infinite series of conditioned causes, which the latter scheme supposes. Yet, by the laws of thought, of these contradictions, both inconceivable, one must be true — the will must be free, or not free. In this dilemma comes in human consciousness, and throws her casting-vote in favor of freedom. We know that we *are* free, though we cannot conceive how.

“ We are unable to conceive an absolute commencement ; we cannot, therefore, conceive a free volition. A determination by motives cannot, to our understanding, escape from necessitation. Nay, were we even to admit as true what we cannot think as possible, still

the doctrine of a motionless volition would be only casualism ; and the free acts of an indifferent are, morally and rationally, as worthless as the pre-ordered passions of a determined will. *How*, therefore, I repeat, moral liberty is possible, in man or God, we are utterly unable, speculatively, to understand. But practically to *feel* that we are free, is given to us in the consciousness of an uncompromising law of duty, in the consciousness of our moral accountability ; and this fact of liberty cannot be redargued on the ground that it is incomprehensible ; for the philosophy of the conditioned proves, against the necessitarian, that things there are which *may*, nay *must*, be true, of which the understanding is wholly unable to construe to itself the possibility.

“ But this philosophy is not only competent to defend the fact of our moral liberty, possible though inconceivable, against the assault of the fatalist ; it retorts, against himself, the very objection of incomprehensibility by which the fatalist had thought to triumph over the libertarian. For, while fatalism is a recoil from the more obtrusive inconceivability of an absolute commencement, on the fact of which commencement the doctrine of liberty proceeds, the fatalist is shown to overlook the equal but less obtrusive inconceivability of an infinite non-commencement, on the assertion of which non-commencement his own doctrine of necessity must ultimately rest. As equally unthinkable, the two counter, the two one-sided, schemes are thus theoretically balanced. But practically our consciousness of the moral law, which without a moral liberty in man would be a mendacious imperative, gives a decisive preponderance to the doctrine of freedom over the doctrine

of fate. We are free in act if we are accountable for our actions.”<sup>1</sup>

The only question we should raise respecting this argument relates to the idea of freedom here implied : Is it essential to a free volition that it be a volition undetermined by motives ? Is a *motiveless* will the only free will ? It seems to us that too much is here conceded to the necessitarian. Grant him this, and nothing is easier than for him to show that no such thing as freedom exists, or can exist, in heaven or on earth. Freedom becomes not only *inconceivable*, but *impossible*, on this ground. Neither man nor God possesses any such freedom. To the divine mind, its own nature and the eternal fitness of things are a law ; and by this law its action is conditioned. That infinite abhorrence of evil which dwells ever in the divine mind and shapes its action, is not itself without a cause. And as to man, who does not know that his choices are influenced and determined by a thousand varying circumstances ; that his very nature, be it what it may, is an ever-present and powerful influence upon his will ; that his reason and moral sense, whether coinciding with or counter-acting the impulses of that nature, act also as determining influences ; so that the actual volitions of man are never absolute originations of the will, for which no reason exists, no ground of their being, out of the mere faculty of willing ; but, on the contrary, when we choose, it is always in view of something which influences the choice, and which is the reason or ground why we choose as we do. Nor is it possible to choose under other circumstances. Absolute indifference is incompatible with choice. Where there is no pref-

<sup>1</sup> Wight's Philosophy of Sir William Hamilton, pp. 508-512.

ference, there is no choice ; and where no choice, no volition.

Such a freedom as is here supposed is, then, not merely inconceivable, but is neither actual nor possible, whether to God or man. And, accordingly, this is not the freedom for which consciousness gives her casting-vote, when called to decide the vexed question of the will. We are conscious of freedom, but not of the sort of freedom now intended. We know that we are free ; but we also know that our choices are influenced by motives.

While, then, we fully admit the impossibility of *conceiving*, on the one hand, a cause not itself caused, and, on the other, an infinite series of determined causes, we cannot adopt the idea of freedom here implied, nor concede that a will under the influence of motives is, for that reason, not a free will.

## NOTES.

## NOTE A. — Page 10.

To his honor be it said, no one was more ready to acknowledge that ability, and do honor to his antagonist, than Victor Cousin himself. When, subsequently, Hamilton became a competitor with Combe, and many other candidates, for the chair of Logic and Metaphysics in Edinburgh, Cousin interested himself to secure his appointment. In a letter written for that purpose to a friend of his in Scotland, he speaks in the highest terms of Hamilton's qualifications for that office. A paragraph or two we are tempted to subjoin as showing Cousin's estimate of the man.

After speaking of the differences of their respective systems, and of Sir William Hamilton as of all men in Europe the acknowledged defender and representative of the Scotch philosophy, by his invaluable articles in the Edinburgh Review, and noticing particularly the article above referred to, as civil in form but severe in substance, and the most weighty of anything that had been written in criticism of his views, he goes on to say: "It is not I who would solicit Scotland in behalf of Mr. Hamilton, it is Scotland herself who should honor with her suffrage him who, since Dugald Stewart, alone represents her in Europe.

"In fact that which characterizes Mr. Hamilton is precisely the Scotch spirit, and if he is devoted to the philosophy of Reid and Stewart, it is only because that philosophy is the Scottish spirit itself applied to metaphysics. Mr. Hamilton never strays from the high road of common sense; and at the same time he has much genius and sagacity; and I assure you (I know it by experience) that his logic is by no means convenient to his antagonist. Inferior to Reid in invention and originality, and to Stewart in grace and delicacy, he is perhaps superior to both, and certainly to the latter, in rigor of dialectic, and I will add in extent of erudition. Mr. Hamilton knows all systems, ancient and modern, and his critique of them is after the true Scottish spirit. His independence is equal to his learning. He is specially eminent in logic. I will speak here as a



man of the trade. Be assured that Mr. Hamilton is the man of all your countrymen who best understands Aristotle, and if there is in the three realms of his Britannic Majesty a chair of Logic vacant, hesitate not; hasten to bestow it on Mr. Hamilton. . . . .

"In fine, my dear sir, if it savor not too much of pretention and arrogance on my part, I beseech you to say in my name, to those on whom depends this nomination, that they hold perhaps in their hands the philosophic future of Scotland; and that it is a stranger, exempt from all spirit of party and clique who earnestly entreats them to remember that it is for them to give a successor to Reid and Stewart; and that in a matter of such importance they will not disregard the opinion of Europe. . . . .

"I know not who are Mr. Hamilton's competitors, but I rejoice for Scotland if there is one who has received from disinterested strangers, conversant with these matters, the like public eulogium.

"Adieu, my dear sir, etc.

V. COUSIN."

"PARIS, June 1, 1836."

The original may be found in the preface to M. Peisse's "*Fragments de Philosophie, par W. Hamilton.*" It were difficult to say whether this letter, so generous in its estimate of a philosophical opponent, reflects higher credit upon Hamilton or upon Cousin himself. Letters of a similar nature, it may here be remarked, were on the same occasion placed before the Council of Patrons, from eighteen savans and men of letters of all nations—a fact which shows the impression already made upon the cultivated mind of Europe by the genius of Hamilton.

#### NOTE B. — Page 42.

It should be remarked that Hamilton carefully distinguishes, as those with whom he contends do not, between the absolute and the infinite. With Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Cousin, and the philosophers of the transcendental class generally, the terms *absolute* and *infinite* are used, not as opposed to each other, but to denote in general that which is wholly unconditioned. With Hamilton the absolute is the unconditionally limited,—the whole, complete—corresponding to the τὸ ὅλον of Aristotle. The infinite on the other hand is the wholly unlimited. The one is, with him, the direct opposite of the other; the one affirming, the other denying, limitation.

It may here be remarked that Professor Mansel, of whom we shall have occasion presently to speak, uses the term *absolute*, not in the strict sense of Hamilton as opposed to the infinite, but in the more general sense of the transcendental philosophers, as denoting that which is out of all necessary relation — the opposite of the necessarily relative.

NOTE C. — Page 53.

Does not the difficulty, so far as it lies in the reasons now assigned, pertain to the divine mind, as much as to the human? To conceive is to limit. To know is to distinguish one thing from another; and all distinction is limitation. But is this a peculiarity of human thinking and human knowing? In the act of self-knowledge or self-consciousness does not God distinguish himself from other objects — the Creator from the created; the infinite from the finite; self from not-self? Does he not distinguish between himself and Gabriel or Satan? But this is to limit himself. On the other hand, not thus to distinguish is to regard himself as the universal whole — and absolute pantheism results.

Is it replied the divine knowledge and consciousness are different from the human, and therefore may involve no limitation? That may be. But if the divine consciousness so far differs from the human as not to distinguish self from not-self, the infinite from the finite; then, whatever else it may be, it certainly is not self-knowledge or self-consciousness. If it does thus distinguish, then in so doing it involves limitation, in the same way and for the same reason that human consciousness does.

It is not without reason, then, that the philosophy of the absolute in its purest form denies consciousness, personality, and intelligence to the infinite. The denial is a logical necessity from the premises. The distance from pantheism to atheism is the distance from premise to conclusion. The infinite, in the sense of the absolutely unlimited is in truth the pure nothing of Hegel. To predicate any quality, any attribute, any substance even, of this infinite nothing, is to limit it. The moment it becomes something it becomes definite, no longer infinite.

Is then the Deity to himself unknown, to himself an enigma and a blank? Or shall we conclude that the idea of the infinite in the sense of the absolutely unlimited, does not pertain to the true conception of Deity?

## II.

### MILL VERSUS HAMILTON.<sup>1</sup>

Two conflicting systems of philosophy are contending at the present day for the mastery in Great Britain and America. The issues are by no means unimportant. It is a question of no little moment, which shall command the cultivated mind of the age and direct its thinking, for the next generation. It is the custom of some to speak lightly of metaphysical differences and discussions as of no practical importance. But consequences of greatest moment are often involved in systems of merely speculative philosophy. Such is the case in the present instance. Not the philosopher, the metaphysician, merely, but, directly or indirectly, every man of intellectual culture, and through these the still larger class whose opinions are influenced and whose conduct is guided by them, is personally concerned in this matter. No educated man, of whatever calling or profession, at the present day, — certainly no Christian minister, — can afford to be uninformed or misinformed as to the controversy now going on between these two conflicting modes of thought. Many, however, especially professional men, who desire to pronounce an intelligent opinion on the subject, have not the time which is re-

<sup>1</sup> From the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for July, 1868, Vol. xxv. No. 99. A Paper read before the Alumni Institute of Chicago Theological Seminary, at its recent session.

quired for such investigations, or, perhaps, the previous metaphysical training which would qualify them to sit in judgment on questions of this nature. It may be of service to such in their inquiries to point out in the following article *the essential points of difference of the two systems*, and also *some of the defects of each*.

Before proceeding to our main purpose, however, a few words seem necessary respecting the men themselves whose systems we are to compare and discuss. It is known to most that Hamilton, having received in early life the most complete classical training, — first at Glasgow and afterwards at Oxford, — became a student of law, was subsequently appointed professor of History, afterwards of Logic and Metaphysics, in the University of Edinburgh, which post he filled with honor and increasing reputation for many years. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the man is his wonderful erudition. Few men, ancient or modern, have ever equalled him in this. He was complete master of the opinions of men of all ages and nations. The literature and whole history of any subject which he had occasion to discuss, of any idea or doctrine which he wished either to advance or to reject, lay before his glance in all its completeness; so that whatever position he assumed, he was master of the situation. Aristotle and his chief commentators, the writings of the schoolmen and of the early church Fathers, the mediaeval writers, the modern philosophers of Europe, from Descartes to Kant, all were familiar to him as household words. While, however, he called no man master, Aristotle among the ancients, and Reid and Kant among the moderns, were the three thinkers who exerted the greatest influence in the formation of his

opinions and habits of thought. His power of analysis and generalization is unsurpassed. His clear, searching eye penetrated at a glance through all the surroundings and incidentals, to the very pith and heart of a subject. His logic is terrible, as Cousin — foeman worthy of his steel — frankly confesses. Dogmatic at times, resolute and persistent always, severe sometimes with an opponent, but manly and honest even in his severest mood, he is an antagonist whom few would do well to encounter, and none to provoke. His style is peculiar, “never loose,” to use the well chosen words of McCosh, “never tedious, never dull; it is always clear, always terse, always masculine, and at times it is sententious, clinching, and apothegmatic. . . . . He uses a sharp chisel and strikes his hammer with a decided blow; and his ideas commonly stand out before us like a clear-cut statue, standing firmly on its pedestal between us and a clear sky. Indeed, we might with justice describe his style as not only accurate but even beautiful, in a sense, from its compression, its compactness, its vigor, and its point.”

To pass from this remarkable man to his present critic and antagonist. John Stuart Mill, the son of James Mill, a philosophic writer of considerable eminence of the empirical and utilitarian school, seems to have received his early bias and direction chiefly from his father's speculative opinions and modes of thought. Without the advantage of academic and classical training, he is still a well-educated, though a self-educated man, widely read and well-informed on most subjects, more particularly in history and natural science; while his studies and published writings have led him chiefly to the discussion of logic and metaphysics, including

political economy and social science. Accustomed to think for himself, like most self-educated men, he is deficient in a proper reverence for the past, and that deference for the opinions of others which is the fruit of highest culture. Though not properly a disciple of Comte, he finds much in the spirit and principles of the positive philosophy which commands his respect and admiration. "Though a fairly informed man in the history of philosophy," says one of his principal reviewers, "he has attached himself to a school which thinks it has entirely outstripped the past; and so he has no sympathy with, and no appreciation of, the profound thoughts of the men of former times. These are supposed to belong to the theological or metaphysical ages which have forever passed away in favor of the positive era which has now dawned upon our world. Bred thus in a revolutionary school of opinion, his predilections are in all things in favor of those who are given to change, and against those who think there is immutable truth, or who imagine that they have discovered it. . . . . He is ever able to bring out his views in admirable order, and his thoughts lie in his style like pebbles at the bottom of a transparent stream, so that we see their shape and color without noticing the medium through which we view them. I have only to add, that in his love of the clear and his desire to translate the abstract into the concrete, he often misses the deepest properties of the objects examined by him; and he seems to me far better fitted to co-ordinate the facts of social science than to deal with the first principles of fundamental philosophy." <sup>1</sup>

At present Mr. Mill is in the ascendant in England.

<sup>1</sup> McCosh, *Examination of Mill*, pp. 14, 15, 16.

He commands a degree of influence and authority, and fills a place in the public estimation, second probably to that of no other living thinker and writer in Great Britain. His opinions are law, not merely to the masses, who are attracted by his earnest and noble advocacy of the rights of the people and of civil liberty, but to the educated, and especially the youthful, mind of the country, which is fascinated by his philosophy, and recognizes in him a leader and teacher. He is the magnus Apollo, not merely in the boroughs, the places of business, and the halls of parliament, but in the universities and the schools and courts of law. This personal influence and popularity give additional importance to his philosophical speculations, inasmuch as they give him a power for good or evil over the public mind, such as is wielded probably by no other man in Great Britain, at the present moment. With respect to the work on which Mr. Mill's reputation as an author now chiefly rests, his "Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy," it must be regarded as in some respects a remarkable production. Perhaps it is not too much to call it, with Masson, "a truly splendid work." It certainly displays great mental power, great acuteness and skill in detecting the weak and vulnerable points in an opponents position, and a persistent determination to silence and set aside the great authority of Sir William Hamilton, as acknowledged leader of British thought in matters of philosophic speculation. This work he deliberately undertakes, and to some extent, doubtless, accomplishes in the volumes before us. It was a work quite necessary to be done by some one in the interests of the positive philosophy, as represented by the English branch of the school of Comte,



as also of the empirical and sensational school of Locke, Hobbes, Hume, Priestly; to the further existence of which methods of thought in England the utter demolition of Sir William Hamilton's opinions and authority had become a prime necessity. It was for Mr. Mill, as the acknowledged leader of the revolutionary and empirical philosophy, to attempt the task. With fixed purpose and manly courage he has essayed the work, by no means easy to be done. Of his success the future must judge. Even his opponents must give him credit, on the whole, for fairness and candor in his general treatment of the illustrious rival whose system and whose authority he seeks to demolish. We fully agree, however, with the general estimate of Mr. Mill and his work which is expressed by Dr. McCosh, himself one of the fairest and most impartial of critics: "I am sure Mr. Mill means to be a just critic of his rival. But, from having attached himself to a narrow and exclusive school of philosophy, he is scarcely capable of comprehending—he is certainly utterly incapable of appreciating—some of Hamilton's profounder discussions. It would be easy to show that not a few of the alleged inconsistencies of Hamilton arise from misapprehensions on the part of his critic. . . . I certainly do not look on Mr. Mill as a superficial writer. On the contrary, on subjects on which he has not been led to follow Mr. James Mill or M. Comte, his thoughts are commonly as solid and weighty as they are clearly expressed. But speaking exclusively of his philosophy of first principles, I believe he is getting so ready an acceptance among many for his metaphysical theories mainly because, like Hobbes and Condillac, he possesses a delusive simplicity, which does not account for, but simply

overlooks, the distinguishing properties of our mental nature.”<sup>1</sup>

With these general remarks upon the individual writers, we proceed to the work more properly before us, the discussion of the two systems as such. And first, their essential differences.

#### ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCES.

1. The first and most obvious difference between the two systems is at the very starting-point from which they set forth. In the whole history of philosophy we find the different schools and systems dividing and diverging on this question first and chiefly: Whence come our ideas, notions, beliefs — wholly from experience? or are there some among them of an *a priori* nature, necessary, *connate*, the result of constitutional causes — ideas and beliefs arising in the mind prior to and independent of all experience of the world without, springing from the very structure of the mind itself? This is the great water-shed of philosophic thought and speculation in all ages, from which diverse theories start upon their course toward widely distant oceans. In English philosophy this difference has from the first been most distinctly marked. On the one hand, the empirical or sensational school, deriving all our ideas from experience, and denying all innate, or connate, or *a priori* truth, has been largely in the ascendant in England, as represented by such names as Hobbes, Locke, Hartley, Bentham, Berkeley, Hume, Priestly, Paley, the Mills, father and son, and others of less note.

On the other hand, the spiritual or transcendental

<sup>1</sup> Examination of Mill's Philosophy, pp. 28, 30.

school, as distinguished from the sensational, represented abroad by such names as Descartes, Leibnitz, Kant, Cousin, and the chiefs of modern German speculation, has not been without its disciples and advocates in Great Britain. Of this class were Cudworth and the Cambridge Platonists. The Scotch school has from the first been of this type, as represented in the sober common sense of Reid, the elegance of Stewart, the philosophic clearness and precision of Mackintosh, the genius and eclecticism of Coleridge, and the wonderful erudition and comprehensive grasp of one mightier than they all — Sir William Hamilton. We class Coleridge in this enumeration, with the Scotch school, and this again with the leading transcendentalists of France and Germany — Descartes, Leibnitz, Kant, Cousin, — for the reason that, however widely they may differ in other points and in the general spirit of their respective systems, on the question now under consideration they stand together and agreed. That in the category of our ideas and beliefs are some which transcend the limits of experience, and are not derived from that source, is a doctrine as clearly enunciated, and as firmly held, by Reid, Stewart, and Mackintosh as by Coleridge or Cousin; and as positively by Hamilton and his pupils as by either. As to this matter, the latter is as thorough a transcendentalist as Kant or Schelling.

No philosopher, ancient or modern, has cherished a stronger conviction, or more distinctly and earnestly avowed that conviction, that only on the theory of necessary or *a priori* ideas is any philosophy possible, than has Sir William Hamilton. It pervades and gives character to his whole system, and, as Masson

has very justly remarked, "the whole tenor of his labors was towards an assertion, purification, and re-definition of transcendentalism; and when he died he left the flag of transcendentalism waving anew over more than one citadel of the world."

And this is precisely one of the fundamental differences between the philosophy of Hamilton and that of Mill, who stands as strongly committed to the opposite view. All truth is experimental; all knowledge, ideas, belief of anything, the result of experience, he would have us believe. This is the key to his whole system. It is avowed in his earlier philosophical essays; it is implied in his logic, which is built on this foundation; it comes out distinctly in his latest and chief philosophical work, the Examination of Hamilton. Our highest principles and generalization, our so-called first truths, even mathematical axioms, ideas of right and wrong, of beauty, duty, and the like, are all, he would assure us, of empirical origin, the result of a more or less wide and oft-repeated induction. Nothing is true *a priori*. Knowledge, notion, belief, axiom, are all to be traced back ultimately to sensation. Utilitarianism, or a refined and enlarged expediency, is the only ground of morals. It is only by experience that we come to know that two straight lines cannot enclose a space, or that one course of conduct is right and another wrong.

2. Another essential difference of the two systems relates to the theory of perception. This, too, like the preceding, is one of those great division lines which mark off opposite systems, as a chain of mountains runs through and divides a continent. As the former question decides the psychology, so this the cosmology of any given system. Of what is it precisely that we

are cognizant in the act of external perception — of the object itself directly, or only of the sensations produced in us by the object? That is the question. Cognizant (or, as Hamilton would say, conscious) of the object itself, says one theory. We perceive not merely our own sensations, awakened by the external object, but the object itself, as possessing certain essential necessary qualities, namely, extension in space, divisibility, size, figure, etc., which in common parlance are known as the primary qualities of matter. Thus we come into direct cognizance of an external world. Per contra, we are cognizant, not of the object itself, replies the other theory, not of this directly, not in fact of this at all, but only of our own affections and sensations. We know the existence of anything external to self indirectly and by inference, if indeed at all. According as we give one or the other of these answers to the question proposed, we take our place in philosophy as realists or idealists.

Mankind in general, it has been well said, are natural realists. They believe in the quality of mind and matter, and that the latter is the reality which the senses represent it to be. The external object, the rock, the tree, the mountain, is what it seems, and would be the same as now in form, size, color, sound, and taste, were there no percipient mind to see, hear, touch, or taste it. The waves that beat upon some unknown shore, which no foot of man has ever trod, flash in the moonlight with the same sparkling brilliancy, and crash upon their rocky barriers with the same tumult and uproar, as the billows that play upon the Atlantic coast. Nature is what it seems, and is not in any sense the creation of our own minds. It

requires, however, but little exercise of philosophic thought to perceive that a very considerable part of what we thus regard as really existing out of ourselves is only the affection of our own organism. The taste, the color, the odor, the sound, are our own sensations, and not properties of the object. The most we can say is, they are the effect of the external object on our own sensitive organism, and were that organism different from what it is, the result would be different; the rose would no longer seem red, but green, or some other color; the wave would no longer flash in the sunbeam, nor sound as now upon the rocks; that which is now acid or sweet or bitter to the taste, or pungent to the smell, or soft to the touch, would present far different appearances.

Accordingly we are not surprised to find among philosophers few natural realists, and to find these few throwing out of the account very much which the unthinking multitude regard as external reality. The secondary qualities of matter, so called, are, even by the natural realist, generally considered to be simply affections of our own sense, and not properly qualities of matter at all.

But having conceded so much, where shall we stop? What evidence that the other and so-called primary qualities of objects are not in like manner, some or all of them, mere subjective affections, produced in us by, or at least representing to our minds, some object without, which external object remains to us in itself unknown? So have thought the great majority of philosophers; constructive idealists these, admitting the reality of an external world as somehow represented to us in external perception, but admitting it as

an inference from our own subjective impressions, and not as an object of immediate cognition. What we really know in perception is not the external world, but only our ideas and impressions of that externality, say they.

While in the ranks of natural realism we scarcely number more than some half score philosophers of note, among them Reid, Hamilton, and the disciples of the latter, we find on the role of constructive idealism such names as Descartes, Leibnitz, Kant, Berkeley, Malebranche, Sir Isaac Newton, Locke, and Browne. Others, again, have gone further, and have questioned the existence of any such external reality as represented through our senses, resolving the whole into merely subjective affections of the mind itself; pure idealists these, represented by Berkeley in England and Fichte in Germany.

It is somewhat doubtful, perhaps, to which of these two classes Mill belongs, that of pure or that of constructive idealists. We have thoughts, sensations, feelings, and that is all. Out of this our philosophy must construct itself; out of this our theory of matter and mind is to be evolved. Our present sensations suggest the possibility of other sensations of a similar nature and to an indefinite extent; the idea of something distinct from our fleeting impressions; something fixed and permanent while they vary; something independent of them and us, capable of producing similar effects at any time on our minds and on other minds, and this, he says, is our idea of external substance. "Matter, then, may be defined a permanent possibility of sensation. If I am asked whether I believe in matter, I ask whether the questioner accepts this defi-



dition of it. If he does I believe in matter, and so do all Berkeleians. In any other sense than this I do not." In like manner he resolves the notion of mind into "a series of feelings, or, as it has been called, a thread of consciousness, however supplemented by believed possibilities of consciousness, which are not, though they might be, realized." As in the case of matter, so of mind, this idea of something permanent in distinction from the sensation or feeling of the present moment, "resolves itself into the belief of a permanent possibility of those states." Matter, then, according to this, is the permanent possibility of sensation; mind, a series of feelings, a running thread of consciousness, with a permanent possibility of the same. Such is the cosmology of Mr. Mill, a constructive idealism of the most refined and attenuated sort—if indeed it be not rather the nihilism of Hume himself, from which it is difficult to distinguish it. He seems to us in all this to be more purely an idealist than Berkeley, who admits the real entity of mind, while Mill resolves it into a mere series of feelings, with a permanent possibility of the same.

It is a little remarkable that this series of feelings should have, or seem to have, a knowledge of its own past and future, of itself as having been and to be. This Mr. Mill admits to be inexplicable, and a paradox—one of those ultimate facts which admit of no explanation.

3. The difference now pointed out leads to and involves a further essential difference of the two systems, in respect to the doctrine of the relativity of our knowledge—a difference ontological, as the others were cosmological and psychological. Cosmology and

psychology end with the phenomenal. They are sciences of things as they appear. Ontology, if there be such a thing possible, is the science of the absolute, of things as they are *per se*, and not merely of the appearances — phenomena — which they present. Is such a science possible, however, to man? A question on which philosophy has much debated, and on which, as on the previous questions, different systems find themselves essentially divergent. That there is something beyond and back of the phenomenal, something supernatural or absolute, philosophers have usually admitted. That a knowledge or science of this is possible, — that, with all its endeavors, the human mind can transcend the limits of the purely phenomenal, and attain to a science of things *per se*, or of the absolute, — they have with almost equal unanimity denied. The absolute can be known, not to sense nor to reason, but only to faith. The finite cannot comprehend the infinite. Our knowledge is wholly relative, wholly of the phenomenal.

Perhaps no philosopher has done more to set this matter in its true light than Immanuel Kant. Transcendentalist as he was in psychology, asserting the *a priori* elements of our knowledge with the most convincing clearness and positiveness, he utterly and emphatically denied the possibility of an ontology. Only with the phenomenal has man's reason to do; the absolute is wholly beyond his reach — only another name for the unknown and inconceivable. Those who came after him, however, were not content to abide by that position. The whole current of German philosophy subsequent to Kant has been one continued struggle to recover an ontology, or science of the absolute, as the foundation of all true philosophy. The absolute iden-

tity theory of Fichte, carried out and developed by Schelling and Hegel, are a persistent, resolute attempt to demonstrate an ontology. Cousin has thrown his brilliant name and pen into the same scale.

At first sight one would say, Mill and Hamilton agree in this matter. Both reject the possibility of any such thing as a science of the absolute. Man knows, and can know, only phenomena, never things *per se*. Our knowledge is wholly relative. We know phenomena only; and we know these only as they stand related to our faculties and capacities of knowledge.

Thus far they are agreed. But when we come to inquire what is meant by relativity of knowledge, as that expression is used by each, we find the two philosophers by no means at one.

True, our knowledge is relative, says Hamilton, in the sense already explained. We know not independently and absolutely, but only by means of the phenomena presented to our faculties; but we do know in this way, and our knowledge is real and certain. In every act of perception, for example, as already stated, we have direct, immediate knowledge of self as perceiving, and also of the object perceived — the *ego* and the *non ego*. We are conscious of the two. This is the doctrine of natural realism. On the contrary, says Mill, we know immediately and positively, as already stated, neither the self-perceiving nor the object perceived, — neither the *ego* nor the *non ego*, — but only the impressions produced and the feelings awakened thereby. We know nothing positively beyond these feelings and impressions. There is no certainty of aught else. If it be asked, what guarantee have I that these impressions are correct, — that the

reality corresponds to the impression, it turns out that there is really none whatever. Things seem to be thus and thus, but there is no certainty that they are so. As thus held, the relativity of knowledge amounts to absolute nescience. Nothing is known, nothing certain or positive. As thus held, the doctrine differs *in toto* from the relativity of knowledge as held by Hamilton; and it is a difference essential to the two systems — a difference growing out of the different doctrines of perception held by each.

#### DEFECTS OF MILL.

We have pointed out certain essential differences between the two systems. We regard the system of John Stuart Mill as essentially defective in each of the respects now mentioned. The system is at fault, as it seems to us :

1. In deriving, as it does, all our knowledge and ideas from sensation and experience. This is essentially a shallow and superficial account of the matter. We have ideas and elements of knowledge that cannot thus be accounted for; and while much that goes to make up the inventory of the mental furniture may doubtless be ascribed to an empirical origin, it is equally certain that among those ideas are some which, if not properly innate, are, to say the least, connate, having their foundation in the very structure and constitution of the mind; so that, as the mind develops, these ideas are developed in it by the very nature and law of its being. Without entering fully into the argument, which would lead us beyond our proper limits, it is sufficient to our present purpose to say,

that it is impossible to explain on any other principle the idea of beauty, the idea of right and moral obligation, and the idea of God.

Even Mr. Mill, while purposely rejecting all intuitive principles and *a priori* elements, and seeking to construct all our ideas and operations out of the material furnished by sensation and association, is, as he proceeds, obliged to call in other and *a priori* principles.<sup>1</sup> Thus he admits the existence of intuitive and immediate knowledge, as the source whence other truth may be inferred, and the starting-point of all reasoning. He admits consciousness as a sufficient and self-evident witness, whose testimony is indisputable and ultimate in all cases. He admits our belief in the veracity of memory to be an ultimate fact. He admits a native law of expectation, and original laws of association. All this intuitive, ultimate, and original ground-work of human knowledge is quite inconsistent with that empirical origin of all our ideas which constitutes the fundamental tenet of the school to which Mr. Mill belongs. In fact, the system of Mill, with all its sensational proclivities and empirical spirit and purpose, contains as many assumptions and postulates, or calls to its aid as many first principles, as are demanded by the most strenuous advocates of the intuitional school, whether Scotch or German.

2. The system is at fault in denying, as it does, an immediate knowledge of the actual external world in perception. We regard this doctrine as the special contribution of the Scotch school, and especially of Sir William Hamilton, to mental science — the most im-

<sup>1</sup> See McCosh's Defence of Fundamental Truth, chapter iii on Mr. Mill's Admissions.

portant step in advance which psychology has made in the present century. Mr. Mill reverses all this, takes a step, or in fact many steps, backwards, and lands philosophy again where it was placed by Hume and Berkeley. The effect is to unsettle everything already established, and to leave no solid substantial basis for philosophy to rest upon. If we do not really and immediately perceive an actual external world, but only infer its existence from certain sensations or affections of our own, then we have no longer any positive knowledge that there is such a world without, or even of the existence of the mind itself; for the inference and impression in either case may be erroneous. All that we really and positively know is the existence of certain sensations and impressions — all else is inference and conjecture, more or less probable. Matter becomes, as we have seen, the mere possibility of sensations; and mind, or what we so call, is only the associability of these sensations with each other, together with a certain inexplicable recognition or recollection of themselves as having thus existed and associated in the past, which phenomenon we call memory. “This, and nothing more,” is the sum and substance of all knowledge and certainty to the being called man. To this pitiable residuum, this miserable phantom of a shade, is philosophy reduced by the showing of Mr. Mill.

3. The uncertainty which is thus thrown over the realm of psychology and cosmology is made to extend also to all truth, by Mr. Mill’s peculiar doctrine of the relativity of knowledge — a view of the matter which takes away all certainty of truth, and reduces human knowledge, as we have seen, to a simple and absolute nescience. This we regard as another and fundamental



error of the system. Not only is our knowledge of an external world, and of the mind itself, reduced to a mere inference from our sensations, but our knowledge of anything comes in the last analysis to this — that the thing seems to us thus and thus. The only thing certain is that we have such and such impressions. Of the correctness of those impressions there is no guarantee. To us, constituted as we are, a part is less than the whole, a straight line is the shortest distance between two points, and two and two make four. There is no certainty that these things are so elsewhere, and always — that they are so in the nature of things; in other parts of the universe they may be otherwise. There may be those to whose intelligence two and two are five; orders of being to whom selfishness, deception, and fraud are virtue, and benevolence, sin. Nothing is true universally and necessarily, but only as the mind, by its laws and habits of association, perceives it, or believes it, to be thus and thus. Such, at least, we understand to be the position of Mr. Mill, plainly stated; and, we need hardly add, it is a doctrine far-reaching and fatal in its consequences to all philosophy and all knowledge. The simple fact that two things have been invariably associated in our experience is sufficient, according to Mr. Mill, to account for their seeming to us to be inseparable. "Thus," to use the language of Dr. McCosh, "two and two, having been associated in our experience with four, we give them a relation in the nature of things; but if two and two had been followed by the appearance of five, we should have had a like assurance of two and two and five being equal. Truth, in Mr. Mill's philosophy, is not even a logical or rational consistency between ideas; it



can be nothing more than an accordance of our ideas with sensations, and laws of the association of sensations; which sensations come we know not whence, and are associated by resemblances existing we know not how, or more frequently by contiguity, implying no relation of reason, no connection in the nature of things, and very possibly altogether fortuitous or absolutely fatalistic.

“We see now the issues in which the doctrine of the relativity of knowledge, as held by Mr. Mill, lands us. The geometrical demonstrations of Euclid and Appolonius and Newton may hold good only within our experience and ‘a reasonable distance beyond.’ The mathematics taught in Cambridge may differ in their fundamental principles from those taught in the corresponding university of the planet Jupiter, where two and two may make five, where two straight lines may enclose a space, and where the three angles of a triangle may be more than two right angles.”<sup>1</sup>

The whole body of scientific truth which Mr. Mill has himself done so much to elaborate, becomes in this light, as the same critic justly remarks, “simply possibilities of sensations, coming in groups and in regular succession and with resemblances which can be noticed. And is this the sum of what has been gained by the highest science of the nineteenth century? As we contemplate it, do we not feel as if the solid heart of truth and its radiating light were both gone, and as if we had left only a series of systematic vibrations in an unknown ether? Does this satisfy the convictions and the longings of man? Does not the intelligence declare that it has something deeper than this?”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Examination of Mill, p. 878.

<sup>2</sup> Examination of Mill, p. 874.

The application of this doctrine to morals is sufficiently obvious; and we agree with a writer in the *London Quarterly*,<sup>1</sup> in pronouncing it one "than which none indeed can be more morally pernicious. . . . . If in some other world two and two may make five, in some other world what we regard as virtue may be vice, and our wrong may come forth there as right."<sup>2</sup>

We have noticed what we regard as the essential and fundamental errors of the system of Mr. Mill. The radical differences between his system and that of Hamilton are so many radical errors of the former.

4. It is to be noticed in addition, as a defect of this philosophy, that, even admitting its essential positions, it fails to account for some of the most important mental phenomena.

For example, asserting the strictly empirical origin of all our notions both of mind and matter, it makes the mind, as we have seen, to be a mere series of feelings, tending to associate according to certain laws, with a permanent possibility of the like. But whence this tendency of one feeling or state of consciousness to associate with another — this associability of the feelings? Is not this an *a priori* element — something imparted antecedently to the series of feelings which we call the mind, and something wholly inconsistent with the empirical theory? This associability of the feelings is quietly assumed, postulated as a fact, which it certainly is — but a fact unaccounted for, and not to be accounted for, as it seems to us, on Mr. Mill's theory of the mind. In the language of Masson, — whose critique on Mill, in his work entitled "*Recent British*

<sup>1</sup> January, 1866.

<sup>2</sup> See note (A.) at the end of this Article.

Philosophy," is the most thorough and able discussion of that system which has yet appeared,—"It seems to me that a very large amount of *a priori* assumption is implied in the very terms of the statement. It is assumed, in the first place, that there are certain predetermined associabilities among the phenomena of feeling from the first—that they tend to come together or grow together according to certain laws or rules of associability pre-imparted to them. . . . . Without these precise associabilities among the crude phenomena of feeling, there would not be the result he seeks, that is, the generation of these notions of mind and matter, of an *ego* and a *non ego*, which each mature mind has. But as these associabilities are laws pre-imparted to the phenomena, and regulating most strictly the process of their cogitation, how can the process be said to be empirical?"<sup>1</sup>

Again, the fact of memory is wholly inexplicable on this theory of the mind, as Mr. Mill himself frankly admits. This series of feelings, this running thread of consciousness, recognizes itself not only as existing in the present, but as having existed in the past. But how can a mere series of feelings be aware of feelings which have preceded? The flash of present consciousness—how comes it aware of that which in like manner flashed into consciousness in some past movement? This continuity or union of that which is with that which was—does it not involve something more, as the basis and ground-work of the whole, than the author's theory of the mind as a mere series of sensations will furnish? In the language of Mr. Mill himself, who frankly admits the difficulty, and leaves it unex-

<sup>1</sup> *Recent British Philosophy*, pp. 312, 314.

plained: "If therefore we speak of the mind as a series of feelings, we are obliged to complete the statement by calling it a series of feelings which is aware of itself as past and future; and we are reduced to the alternative of believing that the mind or ego is something different from any series of feelings and possibilities of them, or of accepting the paradox that something which, *ex hypothesi*, is but a series of feelings, can be aware of itself as a series." Mr. Mill, so far from accepting the first part of this alternative, that the mind is really anything different from a series of feelings or possibilities of feeling, prefers to retain his theory or definition of the mind even with the admission of the paradox which it involves. We may well ask, with Masson, "what is the advantage, then, of propounding such a definition?"

There is still another and very important mental phenomenon which the philosophy of Mr. Mill wholly fails to explain. We refer to the feeling of obligation which arises in the mind in view of actions perceived to be right. In accordance with his theory of the empirical origin of our ideas, and in common with the utilitarian school of moralists, Mr. Mill, as we have already seen, derives our idea of right and wrong from the perceived advantage of a prior course of conduct — the benefit or detriment which in our experience we find to result from such and such procedure. In common with Bentham, the elder Mill, and moralists of that school, he makes the "greatest happiness" principle the ruling motive and spring of human conduct. "The utilitarian doctrine," he justly remarks, "is that happiness is desirable, and the only thing desirable, as an end." The existence of the moral judgments and feelings he dis-

tinctly admits as a fact in human nature, phenomena concerning whose reality there can be no dispute; and he proceeds to account for these phenomena on the principle of the chemistry of association, which plays so important a part in the philosophy of Mr. Mill. "The only color for representing our moral judgments as the result of a peculiar fact of our nature, is that our feelings of moral approbation and disapprobation are really peculiar feelings. But it is notorious that peculiar feelings, unlike any others we have experience of, are created by association every day." As instances of this he refers to the love of power, feelings of ambition, envy, jealousy, the love of wealth, etc. Now, not to insist on the fact that some, at least, of these are strictly native principles, and by no means the product of any principle of association or chemistry of thought — as the love of power for instance — it is sufficient to remark that in respect to the mental phenomena now in question, that is, our moral feelings, there is this remarkable feature which does not pertain to any other class of feelings, whether native or acquired — a sense of obligation. I not only perceive by observation and experience that a given course of conduct will be for the advantage and perfect happiness of all concerned, in which case motives of prudence and of general benevolence may lead me to adopt this line of action, but, over and above all such considerations, I feel instinctively that I ought to pursue such a course, that the opposite is blameworthy and must not be pursued. Now whence this "ought," this "must," this sense of obligation? It is precisely here that the utilitarian and empirical theory of Mr. Mill breaks down. It is precisely this essential characteristic feature of our moral

feelings which the philosophy of association is wholly unable to explain, namely, to use the language of Masson, "the conversion of the *prodest* into the *oportet*; the evolution of the participle in *dus* out of never so much of the past participle passive; the demonstration how or why, if it were granted that moral actions are those done with a view to the greatest possible diminution of pain and promotion of pleasure throughout the sentient universe, there should have arisen in connection with this class of actions the notion of moral obligation to do them, unless on the principle of some *a priori* or connate notion of rightness that fitted itself on to that class of actions." <sup>1</sup>

To use the language of Dr. McCosh: "In none of its applications is the theory seen to fail so utterly as in the attempt thus to produce our moral perceptions. Provided we once have the ideas, the laws of association might show how they could be brought up again; how in the reproduction certain parts might sink into shadow and neglect while others come forth into prominence and light; and how the whole feeling by the confluence of different ideas might be wrought into a glow of intensity; but the difficulty of generating the ideas, such ideas, ideas so full of meaning, is not thereby surmounted. The idea I have of pain is one thing, and the idea I have of deceit, that it is morally evil, condemnable, deserving of pain, is an entirely different thing, our consciousness being witness. On the supposition that there is a chemical power in association to create such ideas as those of duty and merit, sin and demerit, this chemical power would be a native moral power; not the product of

<sup>1</sup> Recent British Philosophy, p. 264.



sensations, but a power above them, and adapted to transmute them from the baser into the golden substance.”<sup>1</sup>

In each of the respects now mentioned, the philosophy of sensation and association, even if its positions are conceded, fails utterly to meet and account for the mental phenomenon.

5. It is a defect, not indeed of the system which he advocates, but of Mr. Mill himself as a philosophical writer, that he fails at times to grasp the real drift and meaning of a statement or doctrine which he is opposing, and so raises a false issue. Instances of this occur repeatedly in his examination of Hamilton. Thus, for example, he goes on page after page with all manner of supposition, doubt, and conjecture as to what can be the possible meaning of Sir William Hamilton when he affirms the relativity of our knowledge; and, after involving the matter in all possible confusion, concludes that he cannot have meant anything worth the trouble of asserting — that too, after having himself quoted a passage in which Hamilton expressly, and with the utmost precision, tells us just what he does mean by the expression. “In this proposition,” says Hamilton, “the term *relative* is opposed to the term *absolute*; and therefore, in saying that we know only the relative, I virtually assert that we know nothing absolute, — nothing existing absolutely, that is, in and for itself, and without relation to us and our faculties.” He goes on to say, that were our senses and faculties of perception indefinitely multiplied, still our whole knowledge would be, as now, only of the relative. Of existence in itself we should still know nothing. “We

<sup>1</sup> Examination of Mill, p. 890.



should still apprehend existence only in certain special modes, only in certain relations to our faculties of knowledge."

Nothing can be plainer than this—nothing truer. Yet Mr. Mill professes to be entirely lost in the vain endeavor to comprehend in what possible sense Hamilton can use the term "relativity of knowledge." For does not Hamilton also teach in plainest terms that there are certain qualities of matter; to wit, extension and the other primary and essential attributes, which we know immediately and as they are in themselves—not merely by their effects on us? If so, how is such knowledge relative? But Hamilton himself answers, "In saying that a thing is known *in itself*, I do not mean a thing is known in its absolute existence, that is, out of relation to us. *To know a thing in itself, or immediately*, is an expression I use *merely in contrast to the knowledge of a thing in representation, or mediately.*" The words which we have taken the liberty to italicize in the above passage, and that previously cited, show, as clearly as it is possible for language to show anything, precisely what Hamilton means by "relativity of knowledge" on the one hand, and by "the knowledge of a thing as it is in itself" on the other; and it requires no little ingenuity to twist the two into any real, or even apparent inconsistency.

Mr. Mill quotes these very passages, but on the very next page tells us with all assurance and complacency, that "if what we perceive and cognize is not merely a cause of our suggestive impressions, but a thing possessing in its own nature and essence a long list of properties, extension, etc., all perceived as essential attributes of the thing as objectively existing . . . .

then I am willing to believe that in affirming this knowledge to be entirely relative to self, such a thinker as Sir William Hamilton had a meaning; but I have no small difficulty in discovering what it is!"<sup>1</sup> We can hardly conceive how a mind of ordinary sagacity and acumen could find any such difficulty; but while it is not for us to question the fact, in the face of his own positive assertion, that he really cannot tell what Sir William Hamilton means in the above statements, it becomes a serious question whether a mind so peculiarly constituted is precisely fitted to sit in judgment as a critic on a system like Hamilton's, or, in fact, on any system of metaphysical philosophy.

A like instance of confusion of thought occurs in his critique on Hamilton's doctrine of the Infinite and the Absolute, as against Cousin; in which he persistently substitutes the concrete expressions, "*an* Infinite," "*an* Absolute," in place of the abstract, "*the* Infinite," "*the* Absolute," and proceeds to argue the case as if they were synonymous; whereas the whole matter turns on precisely this difference.

This is the more remarkable inasmuch as he himself first correctly states the real question at issue, and then deliberately proceeds to substitute and discuss in its place an entirely different question. "The question is," he says, "whether we have a direct intuition of 'the Infinite,' and 'the Absolute,' Mr. Cousin maintaining that we have, Sir William Hamilton that we have not; that the Infinite and the Absolute are inconceivable to us, and, by consequence, unknowable."<sup>2</sup> That is precisely the question. And yet, in reviewing

<sup>1</sup> Examination of Hamilton, i. p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Examination of Hamilton, i. p. 48.

the arguments of Sir William Hamilton for the position which he maintains, the very first remark of Mr. Mill is "that most of them lose their application by simply substituting for the metaphysical abstraction '*the Absolute*,' the more intelligible concrete expression '*something absolute*.'" <sup>1</sup> Indeed they do! "It is these unmeaning abstractions, however, these muddles of self-contradiction, which alone our author has proved against Cousin and others, to be unknowable. He has shown without difficulty that we cannot know the Infinite or the Absolute. He has not shown that we cannot know a concrete reality as infinite or as absolute." <sup>2</sup> This latter, we reply, was not what Cousin held; Cousin's doctrine is not that we may know a concrete being as infinite and absolute, but that we may know "*the Infinite*" and "*the Absolute*," — as Mill himself had just before correctly stated. And if Hamilton has shown this, then he has shown precisely what he undertook to show.

This misconception of the matter at issue, and confusion of things that differ, runs through the entire chapter, and re-appears at every step of the argument. Thus in regard to the negative character of our notions of the Infinite and Absolute: "This is quite true of the senseless abstraction '*the Infinite*.' That indeed is purely negative; but in place of '*the Infinite*,' put the idea of '*something infinite*' — in other words, change the very proposition which Hamilton is refuting — '*and the argument collapses at once*.'" <sup>3</sup> Verily so! This mistake is one into which McCosh has also fallen, who cites with approval the views of Mill, as above, and pronounces them to be safer, and in some respects

<sup>1</sup> Examination of Hamilton, i. p. 58. <sup>2</sup> Ibid i. p. 161. <sup>3</sup> Ibid i. p. 82.

juster, than those of Hamilton!"<sup>1</sup> No doubt we can conceive of something infinite, or of a being of infinite perfection, as McCosh and Mill assert; but that is not to conceive of "the Infinite."

6. There is yet another respect in which the erroneous tendency of Mr. Mill's philosophy is manifest, to which at present we can merely allude. We refer to its theological bearings. While professing to leave the whole subject of natural theology untouched, and an open question, it seems to us really to undermine some of its essential principles. The matter has been well stated by Dr. McCosh: "It is clear that many of the old proofs cannot be advanced by those who accept his theory. The argument from catholic consent can have no value on such a system. That derived from the moral faculty in man, so much insisted on by Kant and Chalmers, is no longer available, when it is to be allowed that the moral law has no place in our constitution, and that our moral sentiments are generated by inferior feelings and associated circumstances. But then he tells us the design argument 'would stand exactly where it does.' I doubt much whether this is the case. I see no principles left by Mr. Mill sufficient to enable us to answer the objections which have been urged against it by Hume. Kant is usually reckoned as having been successful in showing that the argument from design involves the principle of cause and effect. We see an order and an adaptation in nature which are evidently effects, and we look for a cause. Has Mr. Mill's doctrine of causation left this proof untouched? Suppose that we allow to him that there is nothing in an effect which of itself implies a cause;

<sup>1</sup> Defence of Fundamental Truth, p. 78.



that even when we know that there is a cause, no light is thereby thrown on the nature of that cause; that the causal relation is simply that of invariable antecedence within the limits of our experience; and that beyond our experience there may be events without a cause,—I fear that the argument is left without a foundation.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Mill is himself of the opinion that a belief in an overruling Providence and a personal God is by no means essential to religion or to the practical government of human conduct. In his latest work, a critique on the positive philosophy of Comte, he holds the following language: “Though conscious of being in an extremely small minority, we venture to think that a religion may exist without belief in a God, and that a religion without a God may be, even to Christians, an instructive and profitable object of contemplation.”<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Mill, however, would not be understood as denying the existence of the Divine Being, or his providential and moral government. He would leave all this an open question in philosophy, and censures M. Comte for unwisely and unnecessarily encumbering the positive philosophy with a religious prejudice, by avowing the opinion that mankind, when properly instructed, “would cease to refer the constitution of nature to an intelligent will, or to believe at all in a Creator and Supreme Governor of the world. . . . . It is one of Comte’s mistakes that he never allows of open questions,” says Mill. “The positive mode of thought is not necessarily a denial of the supernatural; it merely throws back that question to the origin of things. If the universe had a beginning, its beginning, by the

<sup>1</sup> Examination of Mill, pp. 424, 425.

<sup>2</sup> Comte, etc., p. 183.

very conditions of the case, was supernatural; the laws of nature cannot account for their origin. The positive philosopher is free to form his opinion on this subject according to the weight he attaches to the analogies which are called works of design, and to the general traditions of the human race. The value of these evidences is indeed a question for positive philosophy; but it is not one on which positive philosophers must necessarily be agreed."

It would be interesting to know on which side of this open question Mr. Mill himself stands — whether in his opinion the universe had a beginning and a beginner or not. On this he gives us no light, but only informs us that if we see fit to believe in a God, we can do so without necessarily renouncing or coming into conflict with philosophy; though for himself he does not consider such a belief at all essential to religion.

In his *Treatise on Liberty* he speaks in high terms of the doctrines and precepts of Christ, but pronounces them incomplete as a system of ethics for the world. He thinks that "many essential elements of the highest morality are not provided for, nor intended to be provided for, in the recorded deliverances of the Founder of Christianity, and which have been entirely thrown aside in the system of ethics erected on the basis of those deliverances by the Christian church. And this being so, I think it a great error to persist in attempting to find in the Christian doctrine that complete rule for our guidance which its Author intended to sanction and enforce, but only partially to provide. I believe that other ethics than any which can be evolved exclusively from Christian sources must exist side by side with Christian ethics to produce the moral regenera-

tion of mankind."<sup>1</sup> As an instance of this deficiency, he specifies the duty which we owe to the state as one which in the Christian ethics "is scarcely noticed or acknowledged"! We fear Mr. Mill has not studied the Christian ethics as carefully as he might, or he would hardly have ventured such an assertion.

Such, then, is the philosophy of Mr. Mill in its religious bearings. While not denying the doctrine of the divine existence and the great truths of the Christian system, it neither gives nor professes to give us any aid in establishing these truths. The best it can do is to leave the whole matter of the divine existence and the divine government of the world an open question; while it silently undermines and rejects some of the strongest arguments by which these positions have hitherto been maintained. For itself, it does not consider it at all essential to the interests of religion and the moral culture of the race that these truths should be maintained or believed. There may be a religion, efficient for all practical purposes, without a God. If admitted, the Christian system is ethically incomplete and insufficient, requiring to be supplemented.

We have noticed in the preceding pages some of the defects of Mr. Mill's system, as it strikes us. To sum up the matter in a few words: He gives us a philosophy without first principles, a cosmology without a material world, a psychology without a soul, and a theology without a God.

But it is time to notice in turn the errors of the system which Mr. Mill so strenuously opposes.

<sup>1</sup> Liberty, pp. 91, 92.



## DEFECTS OF HAMILTON.

There are, it must be conceded, certain errors and inconsistencies, not so much of the system of Hamilton, for they are not essential to that, as of the individual thinker; which are to be regretted nevertheless as defects, more or less serious, in the philosophical speculations of this remarkable man. Some of these have been pointed out by Mr. Mill, some of them previously by other writers.

1. Hamilton's theory of causation; this we cannot but regard as essentially defective. He attributes this idea to the mind's inability to conceive the absolute commencement of anything, the absolute beginning of existence, or its absolute end. The belief that every event has a cause, instead of being a special principle of our nature, an intuition of the mind, arises, according to this view, "not from a power, but from an impotence of mind." We regard this theory, and the reasoning by which it is sustained, as wholly unsatisfactory and erroneous. We do not, in fact, as Hamilton supposes, conceive the Deity as in creation evolving existence out of himself, but rather as calling it into being out of nothing. True, we cannot comprehend this, nor even represent it to ourselves in thought as taking place, but it is our idea of what does occur in creation, it is what we understand by that term. We deny that there is any such impotence of the mind as that referred to; and we deny that if there were it would adequately account for that principle of the human mind which leads it everywhere and always to demand a cause for every event.

To resolve this principle, as Hamilton does, into an

inability to conceive an absolute beginning, is a most unfortunate solution of the problem, since according to one of the established maxims of this philosophy, that may be true which is to us inconceivable, and so there may be, after all, such a thing as absolute beginning of existence, or, in the Hamiltonian sense, events without a cause. There is no certitude, then, of a first cause, only an inability on our part to conceive of events uncaused; which inability, however, is no proof that such events do not occur.

2. Nor can we regard the Hamiltonian theory of the will as more satisfactory than his account of the principle of causation. The two theories in fact stand very closely connected. For the same reason above mentioned, namely, that we cannot conceive an actual commencement, it is also impossible, says Hamilton, to conceive a free volition, for that would be a volition without a cause, an absolute commencement. We have, however, the testimony of consciousness in favor of freedom, and so accept the fact while admitting it to be inconceivable. To this view of the matter we wholly object. A free volition is not a volition without a cause, nor is it in any way or for any reason, a thing inconceivable. It is wholly a false idea of freedom to conceive of it as something inconsistent with the idea of cause, inconsistent with the influence of motives, inconsistent with any influence, tendency, inclination whatever, for or against a given object. Nothing can be more absurd or more contrary to fact than such a conception of freedom. Yet it is throughout Sir William Hamilton's idea. Free-will is inconceivable, he maintains, first and chiefly, as already stated, for the reason that it supposes a volition without a cause,

that is an absolute beginning, which is inconceivable, and furthermore, for the additional reason that the will is determined by motives, and "a determination by motives cannot to our understanding escape from necessitation."

It is of no use to reply, with Reid and other advocates of free-will, that motives are not of the nature of causes, that they influence, but do not cause or determine, the mind's action. "If motives influence to action," replies Hamilton, "they must co-operate in producing a certain effect upon the agent, and the determination to act, and to act in a certain manner, is that effect." They are therefore causes, and cause is necessity. Against this idea of what constitutes freedom we earnestly and stoutly protest, as wholly unfounded and untrue to the facts of the case. The thing really inconceivable is not the doctrine of free-will, but how such an idea of freedom as that now described could ever come to be entertained by a mind so clear and penetrating as Sir William Hamilton's.<sup>1</sup> Such surely is not the freedom to which consciousness testifies, and which our moral accountability demands. The volitions of which our consciousness testifies, that they are free, are not volitions uncaused and undetermined, but such as the mind has itself put forth in the full and free exercise of its own powers, in view of motives, and the manifold influences that surround it, and constitute the circumstances of its action. Under these influences the mind acts, and acts as it does, but still with full power and consciousness of power to an opposite choice. This is all the freedom we know anything of in consciousness, and such freedom is per-

<sup>1</sup> It must be conceded, however, that in this he was but following Kant.

fectly conceivable, because matter-of-fact and constantly recurring history.

But Hamilton will have it that these influences which lead the mind to act as it does are veritable causes, and not merely reasons of the mind's action, and as causes are of the nature of necessity. "On the supposition that the sum of influences (motives, dispositions, and tendencies) to volition A is equal to twelve, and the sum of influences to counter-volition B equal to eight, can we conceive," he asks, "that the determination of volition A should not be necessary?" That, we reply, is precisely what we can and do conceive. Actual, the volition A may be, and will be, in the case supposed—actual, but not necessary. The certainty of an event and the necessity of an event are two different things,—a distinction constantly overlooked by Hamilton in common with Mill and most writers of the necessitarian school, as well as many of the advocates of free-will. The certainty of an action may result from the impossibility of its not occurring, in which case the act is one of necessity; or it may result from other causes, in which case there is no necessity. In the case supposed, where the influences which tend to volition A greatly preponderate, it may be quite certain that A and not B will be the actual choice of the mind; but still with no impossibility of choosing B; on the contrary a distinctly recognized and felt possibility of it; therefore no necessity.

We have long felt that an intelligent and valid defence of the doctrine of free-will is utterly impossible on any such ground, and any such notion of what freedom is, as that assumed by Sir William Hamilton. It was by no means difficult for an antagonist so acute

as Mr. Mill, following in his wake and adopting his premises, — understanding by freedom, as he does, the entire absence of any such thing as cause or influence, whether of motive, disposition, character, or any other source; and by necessity all connection of volition with any preceding cause, motive, or influence whatever, — with these ideas and concessions as to the nature of freedom and necessity, nothing was easier, we say, than for Mr. Mill to show that there is no ground for the doctrine of liberty to stand upon, and that the arguments of Hamilton in defence of free-will are inconclusive and untenable.<sup>1</sup>

3. There are some other matters of less importance in which we cannot but think the positions of Hamilton erroneous. His theory of the general conditions which determine the existence of pleasure and pain; namely, that these emotions are the result, the one of the spontaneous and unimpeded exertion of conscious power, the other of the overstrained or repressed exertion of such power, — is an explanation of the matter which, however applicable to the pains and pleasures of intellectual and physical activity, will by no means apply to the much larger class of painful and pleasurable feelings which are organic and passive. This Mill has acutely shown by reference to the sense of taste, as exercised on objects sweet or acrid or bitter; all which equally answer the conditions of the theory, but by no means produce equally pleasurable results.<sup>2</sup>

The theory of unconscious mental modifications, while it may very probably be true, seems to us hardly established by the arguments which Hamilton gives in

<sup>1</sup> See note (B.) at the end of this Article.

<sup>2</sup> Examination of Hamilton, pp. 257-259.

its favor. The instances to which he refers as evidences of such modification may quite as readily be explained on the hypothesis of Stewart, that the missing trains of thought were once present in consciousness, but have subsequently been forgotten.

Again, whatever may be thought of Sir William Hamilton's application of the term "consciousness" to denote the knowledge of objects external to self, as well as of what passes within the mind, it is certainly inconsistent to maintain, as he does, that "consciousness comprehends every cognitive act, in other words, whatever we are not conscious of, that we do not know," and still to deny that in an act of memory we have a consciousness of the past. If consciousness is limited to immediate knowledge, exclusive of the past and the absent, then it is not true that it comprehends every cognitive act.<sup>1</sup>

A similar inconsistency, as Mr. Mill is not slow to discover, occurs in the definition of logic as "the science of the laws of thought as thought," or, "the science of the necessary forms of thought," while at the same time, as subsequently explained, the laws in question prove to be not necessary laws at all, but such as may be violated at pleasure — not necessary to all thought, but only to all valid or correct thought.<sup>2</sup>

Many of these inconsistencies and discrepancies which Mr. Mill has enumerated are doubtless owing to the fact that the different parts of his system are not carefully adjusted to each other. It is, as Masson has expressed it, "a philosophy of imperfect junctions. One doctrine pursued at one time does not always meet or lead into another pursued at another time, or seem as if it could

<sup>1</sup> Examination of Hamilton, i. p. 144.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. ii. pp. 144, 145.



meet or lead into it." Mr. Mill compares this characteristic of the system to what might happen in the operation of tunnelling Mount Cenis, were the workmen simultaneously approaching from each end to tunnel past each other in the dark, instead of meeting exactly in the middle. One cause of this incompleteness may have been, as Mr. Mill himself suggests, "the enormous amount of time and mental vigor, which he expended in mere philosophical erudition, leaving, it may be said, only the remains of his mind for the real business of thinking." In part also it is due to the fact that his Lectures, hastily written in the first instance, had not the benefit of his own revision and publication, but were edited by Professors Veitch and Mansel after his death. Meanwhile, during the twenty years which followed, his system was becoming more thoroughly matured and more carefully elaborated, his notes and dissertations appended to his edition of Reid were published, containing his ripest and maturest thoughts, not always coinciding, however, in form and phraseology, not always perhaps in idea and doctrine, with his earlier views as expressed in the Lectures. Had he lived to revise his own works for publication, much of this imperfect adjustment would doubtless have been remedied.

In conclusion, while we would by no means deny or overlook the faults of Sir William Hamilton as a philosopher, some of which we have now indicated, we cannot regard them as essential to, nor at all destructive of, his general system. On the contrary, his main positions are right, and abundantly capable of defence, notwithstanding the errors in question; while, on the other hand, the position of his critics and antagonists are fundamentally erroneous. It has been said of him, with



entire justice, by one who, while admiring, takes the liberty to differ freely, that " notwithstanding incongruities in some parts of his system, he has furnished more valuable contributions to speculative philosophy than any other British writer in this century. . . . . More than any other Englishman, Scotchman, or Irishman for the last two centuries, he has wiped away the reproach from British philosophy, that it is narrow and insular. For years past ordinary authors have seemed learned, and for years to come will seem learned, by drawing from his stores." As regards the influence of his speculative system over British thought, it is sufficient to point to the fact that the chairs of philosophy in three, at least, out of four Scottish universities are filled by his disciples, viz. Professor Fraser of Edinburgh, Veitch of Glasgow, and Baynes of St. Andrews; while McCosh of Queen's College, Belfast, is in the main Hamiltonian, and Mansel of Oxford decidedly so; while among the great writers as well as scholars of Great Britain not a few names of eminence are on the list of his disciples — among the number, that of Dr. John Cairnes of Berwick-upon-Tweed, and of Masson, not the least — with whose words of glowing tribute to the master, we close this sketch.

" Although Hamilton is no more in the midst of us Hamiltonianism is not defunct. But why should I say Hamiltonianism? All our British speculative thought, in every corner where intellect is still receptive and fresh, has been affected, at least posthumously, by the influence of that massive man of the bold look and the clear hazel eye, whose library lamp might have been seen nightly, a few years ago, by late stragglers in one of the streets of Edinburgh, burning far into the night,

when the rest of the city was asleep. Oh, our miserable judgments! Here was a man probably unique in Britain; but Britain was not running after him, nor thinking of him, but was occupied, as she always is, and always will be, with her temporary concerns and her riff-raff of temporary notabilities. And now one has to dig one's way to the best of him through the small type columns of perhaps the most amorphous book ever issued from the British press. But some have done this who had no inducement to do so, except their love of ideas, wherever they were to be found. Mill and Bain, who are fundamentally opposed to Hamilton's Transcendentalism, and Spencer, who is certainly not a Hamiltonian, all acknowledge their respect for Hamilton, and the obligations of British thought to his labor. . . . . But try him by any standard. What a writer he was! What strength and nerve in his style; what felicity in new philosophical expressions! Throw that aside, and try him even in respect of the importance of his effects on the national thought. Whether from his learning, or by reason of his independent thinkings, was it not he that hurled into the midst of us the very questions of metaphysics, and the very forms of those questions, that have become the academic theses everywhere in this British age, for real metaphysical discussion"?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Recent British Philosophy, pp. 217, 252.

## NOTES.

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### NOTE A. — Page 92.

The essential features of Mr. Mill's system are quite accurately portrayed in the following humorously sarcastic lines from Blackwood for August 1866 :

“ His system by some very shallow is reckoned,  
 Three facts, or three fallacies, fill up his cast :  
 Sensation comes first, recollection is second,  
 And then expectation, the third and the last.  
     We feel something present  
     That's painful or pleasant ;  
 We repeat or recall it by memory's skill :  
     What happened before, sir,  
     We look for once more, sir,  
 And that's the whole soul of the great Stuart Mill.

“ At a glimpse of things real we never arrive,  
 Nor at any fixed truth we try to explore,  
 In some different world two and two may make five,  
 Though appearances here seem to say they make four.  
     Our mental formation  
     Has small operation ;  
 The mind — if we have one — is passive and still .  
     We are ruled by our senses,  
     Through all our three tenses,  
 Past, present, and future, says great Stuart Mill.  
 . . . . .

“ What's called right and wrong, sir,  
     Is just an old song, sir ;  
 Ne'er tell me of duty, good actions, or ill ;  
     Being useful or not, sir,  
     Determines the lot, sir ;  
 So Bentham found out, and so thinks Stuart Mill.”

## NOTE B.—Page 109.

In common with Edwards and most necessitarians, Mr. Mill understands by necessity simple certainty of an event, the sure and invariable connection of a volition with its appropriate moral cause in the shape of motive or influence ; necessity in any other sense he distinctly disclaims. "A volition," he says, "is a moral effect which follows the corresponding moral causes as certainly and invariably as physical effects follow the physical causes. Whether it must do so, I acknowledge myself to be entirely ignorant, be the phenomenon moral or physical ; and I condemn accordingly the word necessity as applied to either case. All I know is that it always does." And again : "If necessity means more than this abstract possibility of being foreseen ; if it means any mysterious compulsion, apart from simple invariability of sequence, I deny it as strenuously as any one" (*Examination of Hamilton*, Vol. ii. pp. 281, 300).

### III.

#### THE MORAL FACULTY.<sup>1</sup>

THE subject proposed is one of which it would not be easy to decide which is the greater, the importance or the difficulty. Its importance is seen in the fact that it concerns, at once, the psychologist who would explain the laws of the human mind; the moralist who would propound a system of ethical truth; the theologian who would base his doctrines on a correct philosophy of mind and of morals; and, more than all, the individual man who seeks to conform in the practical government of the conduct to the dictates of his moral nature. Its difficulty is apparent from the fact that it has for so long a period employed the energies of the ablest minds, giving rise to so many questions, so many discussions, by so many writers, with conclusions so diverse.

In entering upon the investigation of this subject it is hardly necessary to raise the preliminary inquiry, as to the *existence* of a moral faculty in man. That we do possess the power of making moral distinctions, that we do discriminate between the right and the wrong in human conduct, is an obvious fact in the history and psychology of the race. Consciousness, observation, the forms of language, the literature of

<sup>1</sup> From the Bibliotheca Sacra for April, 1856, Vol. xiii. No. 50.

the world, the usages of society, all attest and confirm this truth. We are conscious of the operation of this principle in ourselves whenever we contemplate our own conduct or that of others. We find ourselves, involuntarily and as by instinct, pronouncing this act to be right; that, wrong. We recognize the obligation to do, or to have done, otherwise. We approve, or condemn. We are sustained by the calm sense of that self-approval, or cast down by the fearful strength and bitterness of that remorse. And what we find in ourselves we observe also in others. In like circumstances they recognize the same distinctions and exhibit the same emotions. At the story or the sight of some flagrant injustice and wrong, the child and the savage are not less indignant than the philosopher. Nor is this a matter peculiar to one age or people. The languages and the literature of the world indicate that at all times, and among all nations, the distinction between right and wrong has been recognized and felt. The *τὸ δίκαιον* and *τὸ καλόν* of the Greeks, the *honestum* and the *pulchrum* of the Latins, are specimens of a class of words to be found in all languages, the proper use and significance of which is to express the distinctions in question.

Since, then, we do unquestionably recognize moral distinctions, it is clear that we have a moral faculty. For a faculty is simply the power of doing something; and if we find ourselves in possession and use of the power we conclude that we have the faculty.

Without further consideration of this point we pass at once to the investigation of the subject itself. Our inquiries relate principally to the *nature* and *authority* of this faculty. On these points it is hardly necessary

to say, great difference of opinion has existed among philosophers and theologians, and grave questions have arisen. What *is* this faculty as exercised — a judgment, a process of reasoning, or an emotion? Does it belong to the rational, or sensitive part of our nature — to the domain of intellect, or of feeling, or both? What is the *source* and *origin* of these ideas? How come we by them? What *constitutes*, in what consists, the right and the wrong of actions — what is the difference? What is the *ground of our obligation* to do, or not to do, any given thing? What is the value and correctness of our moral perceptions, and especially of that verdict of *approbation* or *censure* which we pass upon ourselves and others, according as the conduct conforms to or violates recognized obligation? Such are some of the questions which have arisen respecting the nature and authority of conscience.

A careful analysis of the phenomena of conscience, with a view to determine the several elements or mental processes that constitute its operation, and then a careful examination of those several elements in their order, may aid us in the solution of these questions.

#### ANALYSIS OF AN ACT OF CONSCIENCE.

Whenever the conduct of intelligent and rational beings is made the subject of contemplation, whether the act thus contemplated be our own, or another's, and whether it be an act already performed, or only proposed, we are cognizant of certain ideas awakened in the mind, and of certain impressions made upon it.

First of all, the act contemplated strikes us as *right*



or *wrong*. This involves a double element — an idea, and a perception or judgment. The idea of right and its opposite are, in the mind, simple ideas, and therefore indefinable. In the act contemplated we recognize the one or the other of these simple elements, and pronounce it, accordingly, a right or a wrong act. This is simply a judgment, a perception, an exercise of the understanding.

No sooner is this idea, this cognition, of the rightness or wrongness of the given act, fairly entertained by the mind, than another idea, another cognition, presents itself, given along with the former, and inseparable from it, viz. that of *obligation* to do, or not to do, the given act; the *ought* and the *ought not* — also simple ideas, and indefinable. This applies equally to the future and to the past, to ourselves and to others: I ought to do the thing; I ought to *have done* it yesterday. He ought, or ought not, to do, or to have done it. This, like the former, is an intellectual act, a perception or cognition of a truth, of a reality, for which we have the same voucher as for any other reality or apprehended fact, viz. the reliability of our mental faculties in general, and the correctness of their operation in the specific instance.

There follows a third element, logically distinct, but chronologically inseparable, from the preceding: the cognition of merit or demerit in connection with the deed, of good or ill desert, and the consequent approval or disapproval of the deed and the doer. This also is an intellectual perception, an exercise of judgment, giving sentence that the contemplated act is, or is not, meritorious, and awarding praise or blame accordingly.

This completes the process. I can discover nothing

in the operation of my mind, in view of moral action, which does not resolve itself into some one of these elements.

Viewed in themselves, these are strictly intellectual operations; the recognition of the right, the recognition of obligation, the perception of good or ill desert, are all properly acts of the intellect. Each of these cognitive acts, however, involves a corresponding action of the sensibilities. The perception of the right awakens in the pure and virtuous mind feelings of pleasure, admiration, love. The idea of obligation becomes, in its turn, through the awakened sensibilities, an impulse and motive to action. The recognition of good or ill desert awakens feelings of esteem and complacency, or the reverse; fills the soul with sweet peace, or stings it with sharp remorse. All these things must be recognized and included by the psychologist among the phenomena of conscience. These emotions, however, are based on, and grow out of, the intellectual acts already named, and are to be viewed as an incidental and subordinate, though by no means unimportant, part of the whole process. When we speak of conscience or the moral faculty, we speak of a *power*, a faculty, and not merely a feeling or susceptibility of being affected. It is a cognitive power, having to do with realities, recognizing real distinctions, and not merely a passive play of the sensibilities. It is analogous to the power of memory, which gives us the actual past; of perception, which gives the actual present as external and material; of imagination, which gives us the ideal. Like these, it has its own proper sphere and province, logically distinct from all others. Like these, it brings before us what we should

not otherwise know. It is simply the mind's power of recognizing a certain class of truths and relations. As such, we claim for it a place among the strictly cognitive powers of the mind, among the faculties that have to do with the perception of truth and reality.

This is a point of some importance. If, with certain writers, we make the moral faculty a matter of mere feeling, overlooking the intellectual perceptions on which this feeling is based, we overlook and leave out of the account the chief elements of the process. The moral faculty is no longer a cognitive power, no longer, in truth, a faculty. The distinctions which it seems to recognize are merely *subjective*; impressions, feelings, to which there may, or may not, be a corresponding reality. We have at least no evidence of any such reality. Such a view subtracts the very foundation of morals. Our feelings vary; but right and wrong do not vary with our feelings. They are objective realities, and not subjective phenomena. As such the mind, by virtue of the natural powers with which it is endowed by the Creator, recognizes them. The power by which it does this we call the *moral faculty*; just as we call its power to take cognizance of another class of truths and relations, viz. the beautiful, its *aesthetic* faculty. In view of these truths and relations, as thus perceived, certain feelings are in either case awakened, and these emotions may with propriety be regarded as pertaining to, and part of the phenomena of conscience and of taste. Full discussion of either of these faculties will include the action of the sensibilities; but in neither case will a true psychology resolve the faculty into the feeling. The mathematician experiences a certain feeling of delight in perceiving the relation of lines and angles;

but the power of perceiving that relation, the faculty by which the mind takes cognizance of such truth, is not to be resolved into the feeling that results from it.

As the result of our analysis, we obtain the following elements, as involved in and constituting an operation of the moral faculty :

I. The mental perception that a given act is right or wrong.

II. The perception of obligation with respect to the same, as right or wrong.

III. The perception of merit or demerit, and the consequent approbation or censure of the agent, as doing the right or the wrong thus perceived.

Accompanying these intellectual perceptions, and based upon them, are certain corresponding emotions, varying in intensity according to the clearness of the mental perceptions and the purity of the moral nature.

As we proceed now to discuss, more in detail, these various elements which the preceding analysis has furnished, the several questions already suggested will naturally present themselves for consideration.

As to the perception of the moral quality of actions, it will be in place to inquire: What is the *origin* of such perception on our part; whence we derive our ideas of right or wrong; how we come to make such a distinction.

As to the element of obligation, it will be in place to inquire what is the *ground* of such obligation

As to the decision of approval or condemnation, it will be pertinent to consider what is the value, and what the power, of such verdict.

To these points, accordingly, our attention will be mainly directed as we proceed to examine, one by

one, in their order, the several mental processes now indicated.

I. *The Perception of an Act as Right or Wrong.*

When we direct our attention to any given instance of the conduct and voluntary action of any intelligent and rational being, we not unfrequently find ourselves pronouncing upon its character as a right or wrong act. Especially is this the case when the act contemplated is of a marked and unusual character. The question at once arises, Is it right? Or, it may be, without the consciousness of even a question respecting it, our decision follows instantly upon the mental apprehension of the act itself: this thing is right, this thing is wrong. Our decision may be correct or incorrect; our perception of the real nature of the act may be clear or obscure; it may make a stronger or a weaker impression on the mind, according to our mental habits, the tone of our moral nature, and the degree to which we have cultivated the moral faculty. There may be minds so degraded, and natures so perverted, that the moral character of an act shall be quite mistaken, or quite overlooked in many cases; or when perceived, it shall make little impression on them. Even in such minds, however, the *idea* of right and wrong still finds a place, and the understanding applies it, though not perhaps always correctly, to particular instances of human conduct. There is no reason to believe that any mind possessing ordinary endowments, those degrees of reason and intelligence which nature usually bestows, is destitute of this idea, or fails altogether to apply it to its own acts, and those of others.

But *whence* come these ideas and perceptions — their origin? How is it, *why* is it, that we pronounce an

act right or wrong, when once fairly apprehended? How come we by these notions? The fact is admitted; the explanations vary. By one class of writers our ideas of this nature have been ascribed to *education* and *fashion*; by another, to *legal restriction*, human or divine. Others, again, viewing these ideas as the offspring of nature, have assigned them either to the operation of a *special sense*, given for this specific purpose, as the eye for vision; or to the joint action of certain associated emotions; while others regard them as originating in an exercise of judgment, and others still as natural intuitions of the mind, or reason exercised on subjects of a moral nature.

The main question is, Are these ideas *natural*, or *artificial and acquired*? If the latter, are they the result of education, or of legal restraint? If the former, are they to be referred to the *sensibilities*, as the result of a special sense, or of association, or to the *intellect*, as the result of the faculty of judgment, or as intuitions of reason?

1. Come they from *education and imitation*? So Locke, Paley, and others have supposed. Locke was led to take this view by tracing, as he did, all simple ideas, except those of our own mental operations, to sensation, as their source. This allows, of course, no place for the ideas of right and wrong, which, accordingly, he concluded, cannot be natural ideas, but must be the result of education.

Now it is to be conceded that education and fashion are powerful instruments in the culture of the mind. Their influence is not to be overlooked in estimating the causes that shape and direct the opinions of men and the tendencies of an age. But they do not account



for the *origin* of anything. This has been ably and clearly shown by Dugald Stewart, in answer to Locke; and it is a sufficient answer. Education and imitation both *presuppose* the existence of moral ideas and distinctions — the very things to be accounted for. How came they who first taught these distinctions, and they who first set the example of making such distinctions, to be *themselves* in possession of these ideas? Whence did *they* derive them? Who taught *them*, and set *them* the example? This is a question not answered by the theory now under consideration. It gives us, therefore, and can give us, no account of the origin of the ideas in question.

2. Do we then derive these ideas from *legal restriction and enactment*? So teach some able writers. Laws are made, human and divine, requiring us to do thus and thus, and forbidding such and such things, and hence we get our ideas originally of right and wrong.

If this be so, then previous to all law there could have been no such ideas, of course. But does not law *presuppose* the idea of right and wrong? Is it not built on that idea as its basis? How then can it originate that on which itself depends, and which it presupposes? The first law ever promulgated must have been either a just or an unjust law, or else of no moral character. If the latter, how could a law which was neither just nor unjust have suggested to the subjects of it any such ideas? If the former, then these qualities, and the ideas of them, must have existed *prior* to the law itself, and whoever made the law, and conferred on it its character, must have had already in his own mind the idea of the right, and its opposite. It is



evident that we cannot, in this way, account for the origin of the ideas in question. We are no nearer the solution of the problem than before.

In opposition to the views now considered, we must regard the ideas in question as directly, or indirectly, the work of nature, and the result of our constitution. The question still remains, however, In which of the several ways indicated does this result take place?

3. Shall we attribute these ideas to a *special sense*? This is the view taken by Hutcheson and his followers. Ascribing, with Locke, all our simple ideas to sensation, but not content with Locke's theory of moral distinctions as the result of education, he sought to account for them by enlarging the sphere of sensation, and introducing a new sense, whose specific office is to take cognizance of such distinctions. The tendency of this theory is evident. While it derives the idea of right, and its opposite, from our natural constitution, and is so far preferable to either of the preceding theories, still, in assigning them a place among the sensibilities, it seems to make morality a mere *sensiment*, a matter of feeling merely, an impression made on our sentient nature — a mere subjective affair — as color and taste are impressions made on our organs of sense, and not properly qualities of bodies. As these affections of the sense do not exist independently, but only relatively to us, so moral distinctions, according to this view, are merely subjective affections of our minds, and not independent realities.

Hume accedes to this general view, and carries it out to its legitimate results, making morality a mere relation between our nature and certain objects, and not an independent quality of actions. Virtue and

vice, like color and taste, the bright and the dull, the sweet and the bitter, lie merely in our sensations.

These sceptical views had been advanced long previously by the sophists, who taught that man is the measure of all things, that things are only what they seem to us.

It is true, as Stewart has observed, that these views do not necessarily result from Hutcheson's theory, nor were they probably held by him; but such is the natural tendency of his doctrine. The term *sense*, as employed by him, is in itself ambiguous, and *may* be used to denote a *mental perception*; but when we speak of *a* sense, we are understood to refer to that part of our constitution, which, when affected from without, gives us certain sensations. Thus the sense of hearing, the sense of vision, the sense of taste, of smell, etc. It is in this way that Hutcheson seems to have employed the term, and his illustrations all point in this direction. He was unfortunate, to say the least, in his use of terms, and in his illustrations; unfortunate, also, in having such a disciple as Hume to push his theory to its legitimate results.

If by a special sense he meant only a direct perceptive power of the mind, then, doubtless, Hutcheson is right in recognizing such a faculty, and attributing to it the ideas under consideration. But that is not the proper meaning of the word *sense*, nor is that the signification attached to it by his followers. But if he means by sense, what the word itself would indicate, some adaptation of the sensibilities to receive impressions from things without, analogous to that by which we are affected through the organs of sense, then, (1) It is not true that we have any such special faculty.

There is no evidence of it; nay, facts contradict it. There is no such *uniformity* of moral impression or sensation as ought to manifest itself on this supposition. Men's eyes and ears are much alike in their activity, the world over. That which is white or red to one is not black to another or green to a third; that which is sweet to one is not sour or bitter to another. At least, if such variations occur they are the result only of some unnatural and unusual condition of the organs. But it is otherwise with the operation of the so-called special sense. While all men have probably some idea of right and wrong, there is the greatest possible variety in its application to particular instances of conduct. What one approves as a virtue, another condemns as a crime.

Nor (2) have we any need to call in the aid of a special sense to give us ideas of this kind. It is not true, as Locke and Hutcheson believed, that all our ideas, except those of our own mental operations or consciousness, are derived ultimately from sensation. We have ideas of the true and the beautiful, ideas of cause and effect, of geometrical and arithmetical relations, and various other ideas, which it would be difficult to trace to the senses as their source, and which, equally with the ideas of right and wrong, would require in that case a special sense for their production.

4. Shall we then adopt the view of that class of ethical writers who account for the origin of these ideas by the *principle of association*? Such men as Hartley, Mill, Mackintosh, and others of that stamp, are not lightly to be set aside in the discussion of such a question. Their view is that the moral perceptions are the result of certain combined antecedent emotions, such

as gratitude, piety, resentment, etc., which relate to the dispositions and actions of voluntary agents, and which very easily and naturally come to be transferred from the agent himself to the action in itself considered, or to the disposition which prompted it; forming, when thus transferred and associated, what we call the moral feelings and perceptions. Just as avarice arises from the original desire, not of money, but of the things which money can procure; which desire comes eventually to be transferred from the objects themselves to the means and instrument of procuring them; and, as sympathy arises from the transfer to others of the feelings which in like circumstances agitate our own bosoms, so, in like manner, by the principle of association, the feelings which naturally arise in view of the conduct of others are transferred from the agent to the act, from the enemy or the benefactor to the injury or the benefaction, which acts stand afterward by themselves as objects of approval or condemnation. Hence the disposition to approve all benevolent acts, and to condemn the opposite, which disposition, thus formed and transferred, is a part of conscience. So of other elementary emotions.

It will be perceived that this theory, which is indebted chiefly to Mackintosh for its completeness and scientific form, makes conscience wholly a matter of sentiment and feeling; standing in this respect on the same ground with the theory of a special sense, and liable in part to the same objections. Hence the name *sentimental* school, often employed to designate collectively the adherents of each of these views. While the theory now proposed might then seem to offer a plausible account of the manner in which our moral *sentiments* arise, it

does not account for the origin of our *ideas* and *perceptions* of moral rectitude. Now the moral faculty is not mere sentiment. There is an intellectual perception of one thing as right and another as wrong; and the question now before us is: Whence comes that perception, and the idea on which it is based? To resolve the whole matter into certain transferred and associated emotions, is to give up the inherent distinction of right and wrong as qualities of actions, and make virtue and vice creations of the sensibility, the play and product of the excited feelings. To admit the perception and idea of the right, and ascribe their origin to antecedent emotion, is moreover to reverse the natural order and law of psychological operation, which bases emotion on perception, and not perception on emotion. We do not first admire, love, hate, and then perceive, but the reverse.

The view now under consideration, while it seems to resolve the moral faculty into mere feeling, thus making morality wholly a relative affair, makes conscience itself an acquired rather than a natural faculty, a secondary process, a transformation of emotions, rather than itself an original principle. It does it moreover the further injustice of deriving its origin from the purely *selfish* principles of our nature. I receive a favor or an injury, hence I regard with certain feelings of complacency, or the opposite, the man who has thus treated me. These feelings I come gradually to transfer to, and associate with, the act in itself considered, and this with other acts of the same nature; and so at last I come to have a moral faculty, and pronounce one thing right and another wrong.

This view is quite inadmissible; at variance with facts



and the well-known laws of the human mind. The moral faculty is one of the earliest to develop itself. It appears in childhood, manifesting itself, not as an acquired and secondary principle, the result of a complicated process of associated and transferred emotion, requiring time for its gradual formation and growth, but rather as an original instinctive principle of nature.

Adam Smith, in his "Theory of Moral Sentiments," has proposed a view which falls properly under the general theory of association, and may be regarded as a modification of it. He attributes our moral perceptions to the feeling of *sympathy*. To adopt the feelings of another is to approve them. If those feelings are such as would naturally be awakened in us by the same objects, we approve them as morally proper. Sympathy with the gratitude of one who has received a favor leads us to regard the benefaction as meritorious. Sympathy with the resentment of an injured man leads us to regard the injurer as worthy of punishment, and so the sense of demerit originates; sympathy with the feelings of others respecting our own conduct, gives rise to self-approval and sense of duty. Rules of morality are merely a summary of these sentiments.

Whatever credit may be due to this ingenious writer for calling attention to a principle which had not been sufficiently taken into account by preceding philosophers, we cannot but regard it as an insufficient explanation of the present case. In the first place we are not *conscious* of the element of sympathy in the decisions and perceptions of the moral faculty. We look at a given action as right or wrong, and approve of it or condemn it *on that ground*, because it is right or wrong, not because we sympathize with the feelings awakened

by the act in the minds of others. If the process supposed intervened between our knowledge of the act and our judgment of its morality, we should know it and recognize it as a distinct element.

Furthermore, sympathy, like other emotions, has an *imperative* character, and, even if it might be supposed to suggest to the mind some idea of moral distinction, cannot of itself furnish a foundation for those feelings of *obligation* which accompany and characterize the decisions of the moral faculty.

But more than this, the view now taken makes the standard of right and wrong *variable*, and dependent on the feelings of men. We must know how others think and feel, how the thing affects them, before we can know whether a given act is right or wrong, to be performed or avoided. And then, furthermore, our feelings must agree with theirs; there must be sympathy and harmony of views and feelings, else the result will not follow. If anything prevents us from knowing what are the feelings of others with respect to a given course of conduct, or if for any reason we fail to sympathize with those feelings, we can have no conception in the matter. As those feelings vary so will our perceptions vary. We have no fixed standard. There is no place left for right, as such, and absolutely. No sympathy, then no duty, no right, no morality.

We have, as yet, found no satisfactory explanation of the origin of our moral ideas and perceptions. They seem not to be the result of education and imitation, nor yet of legal enactment. They seem to be natural rather than artificial and acquired. Yet we can trace them to the action of the sensitive part of human nature. They are not the product of a special



nor yet of the combined and associated action of certain natural emotions, much less of any one emotion, as sympathy. And yet they are a part of our nature. Place man where you will, surround him with what influences you will, you still find in him, to some extent at least, indications of a moral nature; a nature modified indeed by circumstances, but never wholly obliterated. Evidently we must refer the ideas in question, then, to the intellectual, since they do not belong to the sensitive, part of our nature.

5. Are they, then, the product and operation of the faculty of judgment? But the judgment does not *originate* ideas. It compares, distributes, estimates, decides to what class and category a thing belongs, but creates nothing. I have in mind the idea of a triangle, a circle, etc. So soon as certain figures are presented to the eye, I refer them at once, by an act of judgment, to the class to which they belong. I affirm that to be a triangle, this a circle; the judgment does this. But judgment does not furnish my mind with the primary idea of a circle. It deals with this idea already in the mind. So in our judgment of the beauty and deformity of objects. The perception that a landscape or painting is beautiful, is, in one sense, an act of judgment; but it is an act which presupposes the idea of the beautiful already in the mind that so judges. So also of moral distinctions. Whence comes the *idea* of right and wrong which lies at the foundation of every particular judgment as to the moral character of actions? This is the question before us still unanswered; and to this there remains but one reply.

6. The ideas in question are *intuitive*; suggestions or perceptions of reason. The view now proposed may

be thus stated: It is the office of reason to discern the right and the wrong, as well as the true and the false, the beautiful and the reverse. Regarded subjectively, as conceptions of the human mind, right and wrong, as well as beauty and its opposite, truth and its opposite, are simple ideas, incapable of analysis or definition—intuitions of reason. Regarded as objective, right and wrong are realities—qualities absolute and inherent in the nature of things, not fictitious, not the play of human fancy or human feeling, not relative merely to the human mind, but independent, essential, universal, absolute. As such, reason recognizes their existence. Judgment decides that such and such actions do possess the one or the other of these qualities—are right or wrong actions. There follows the sense of obligation to do or not to do, and the consciousness of merit or demerit as we comply, or fail to comply, with the same. In view of these perceptions emotions arise, but only as based upon them. The emotions do not, as the sentimental school affirm, originate the idea, the perception; but the idea, the perception, give rise to the emotions. We are so constituted as to feel certain emotions in view of the moral quality of actions, but the idea and perception of that moral quality must *precede*, and it is the office of reason to produce this.

There are certain simple ideas which must be regarded as first truths, or first principles, of the human understanding, essential to its operations,—ideas universal, absolute, necessary. Such are the ideas of personal existence and identity; of time and space, as conditions of material existence; of number, cause, and mathematical relation. Into this class fall the ideas of the true, the beautiful, the right, and their opposites. The

fundamental maxims of reasoning and morals find here their place.

These are in a sense intuitive perceptions ; not strictly innate, yet connate ; the foundation for them being laid in our nature and constitution. So soon as the mind reaches a certain stage of development they present themselves. Circumstances may promote or retard their appearance. They depend on opportunity to furnish the occasion of their springing up, yet they are nevertheless the natural, spontaneous development of the human soul, as really a part of our nature, as are any of our instinctive impulses, or our mental attributes. They are a part of that native intelligence with which we are endowed by the Author of our being. These intuitions of ours, are not themselves the foundation of right and wrong ; they do not make one thing right and another wrong ; but they are simply the reason why we so regard them. Such we believe to be the true account of the origin of our moral perceptions.

We have directed our attention, thus far, to the first of the several elements that constitute the moral faculty, viz. the perception of the right and wrong in actions. We proceed, now, to discuss the second of these elements or mental processes.

## II. *The perception of obligation.*

No sooner do we apprehend a given act as right or wrong, than we recognize, also, a certain *obligation* resting on us with respect to that act, either to do, or to avoid, the same. It is a conviction of the mind, inseparable from the perception of the right. Given : a clear perception of the one, and we cannot escape the other. The question arises here, *what is the ground of this OUGHT*, what *constitutes* it ; what is that, in any

given action, that imposes on me the obligation or not to do, the same? I ought to do this, and *Why* ought?

Whatever answer we may give to this question must come back ultimately to the simple position, *ought, because it is right*; the *rightness* of a given action constitutes the obligation, on our part, to adhere to the same. Given: the one; given, also, the other: the question, then, What constitutes obligation? resolves itself into this: What constitutes right?

This is a question of no little moment. It has been received, at different times, and from different quarters, widely different answers; and these various answers constitute so many different theories of morals. They lead us over an interesting and important field of inquiry involving one of the deepest and most difficult problems in the whole range of philosophy.

This is altogether a distinct question from that already discussed, though often confounded with it by ethical writers. The question is not, now: *What are our ideas* of right? but, *What makes* right, *what is* right itself? It is quite possible that what is the source of the idea of right may not be the foundation of right itself. I derive my idea of time from succession of events, my idea of space from extension; but succession does not constitute time, nor extension constitute space; on the contrary, time is necessary to succession, and space to extension. The latter presupposes the former, and could not be without them. So with regard to moral distinctions: I may, or may not, be in error for the idea of right, as it exists in my mind, but which is the foundation of right itself.

The principal theories of morals, or grounds of

tion proposed by different writers, may be reduced, perhaps, to these four: 1. Utility; 2. Law; 3. The nature and character of God; 4. The eternal and immutable nature of things. Each of these has been regarded as the true ground on which to place the distinction of right and wrong, and the consequent moral obligation. The two former of these, again, have each a twofold aspect: Utility, as the ground of right, may denote either the *happiness*, the pleasure accruing from a given course (which is itself a species of utility), or the more direct *advantage* resulting from it. Or, if we place the matter on the ground of legal enactment, the law which makes the right and the wrong may be man's law, or it may be God's.

We have, then, these divergent paths opening before us, each proposing to conduct to the true solution of our problem, each trodden by many a mighty man in the domain of thought: the *utilitarian* theory with its twofold aspect, the pleasure and the advantage of the thing; the *legal* theory, twofold also, as of human or Divine authority; the theory which makes the *Divine character* the foundation of right; and, finally, that which bases it on the immutable and eternal nature of things.

Let us, then, examine these several theories in their order:

1. The *utilitarian*. Understanding by this term, in the first place, *pleasure* rather than advantage, the doctrine is this: the reason why we pronounce one thing right rather than another, is, that we find the one act to be attended, uniformly, with pleasure to the doer; the other, with pain; one contributes to his happiness, the other detracts from it. Now the pursuit of hap-



piness, it is contended, is the grand motive and spring of all human action ; and if it be once established that the actions which we call right are such as invariably to promote our happiness, no other reason need be assigned why we thus regard them. And this, it is contended, is the case. If we select any instance of what we call right action, we find it to be an action which is accompanied with pleasurable emotion. And this is the ground of our approval, the reason why we pronounce the action right.

Now it is not to be denied, that to do right brings with it a present satisfaction and true happiness. But this is the constitution of our nature. The question is whether this tendency to produce happiness is what *makes* a given act right. Is the thing right *because* it produces happiness ? or does it promote our happiness *because it is right* ? Which is the true statement ? When I pronounce some past act of my life to be right, and approve it as virtuous, is it because I remember that it gave me great pleasure ? and when I censure the feeling of self-reproach and remorse in view of my conduct, is it on the ground that the given action was accompanied with unpleasant and painful sensations ?

The simple statement of the question would be sufficient. We feel, instinctively, that our decisions of approval rest on far other and higher grounds. Virtue and happiness are by no means identical. We use different terms for them, and mean different things by them. The one cannot be resolved into the other. If it be true that all right things are pleasant, it does not follow that all pleasant things are right, much less that their pleasantness makes them right. Many are the propensities of a corrupt nature, the indulgence

which is attended with present gratification, which still are evil and only evil ; and in their pleasantness consists the very strength of the temptation they present. The man who yields to the force of such temptations, however, by no means approves the course that he pursues. He goes to the commission of the wrong, not with a conviction that he is doing right, but under a protest from his conscience, and with a feeling of self-reproach and self-condemnation. This ought not to be, according to the theory now under consideration. He ought rather to approve his conduct on the ground that he was seeking therein his own happiness ; and his self-approval ought to rise and increase in proportion to the pleasure he receives.

Nor is the case materially altered by substituting the happiness of others, in place of personal happiness, as the ground of right. No doubt right action contributes to the happiness of the community, and swells the sum total of the world's enjoyment ; but is it this that constitutes the rightness of the act ? Is the noble consciousness of doing right, with all its power to sustain the spirit of a man under the pressure of the heaviest calamities and the gloom of the darkest hour merely this : the conviction that, somehow, in consequence of what he has done, men will, on the whole, enjoy themselves better ? Independent and irrespective of all such considerations, is there not a far nobler satisfaction in having done that which was right, in itself considered, and for its own sake ?

The view now considered was the distinctive tenet of the ancient Epicurean philosophy ; and has been held in later times by Hume and Shaftesbury in England, and by their followers generally.



Considering now utility as denoting *advantage* or *expediency*, we come upon somewhat different ground; capable, however, of attack and defence by essentially the same arguments. In fact, the former view may be regarded as a modification of the latter, the one specific the other generic in its form; pleasure being itself a species of advantage, at least in the opinion of those who make it the rule of right. Hence, very generally the advocates of the former view are advocates also of the latter. Still the latter is, of the two, the broader and higher ground.

Self-love, according to this view, is the grand motive of human action. Men do what they think for their advantage. Now it is found by experience that a certain course of conduct is for the advantage, and the opposite for the disadvantage, of the doer, and of all concerned. Hence they come to regard the one course as right, and to be pursued, the other as wrong, and to be avoided. In a word it is the utility or expediency of the thing that constitutes the ground and reason of its rightness. Such is the doctrine of Bentham and his followers.

And here it is admitted on all sides, that virtuous action does contribute to the advantage, in many ways, of the doer. The question is, whether this is what *makes* it virtuous, whether this constitutes its rightness. Is it right because expedient, or expedient because right?

Let us see what follows from this theory.

1. If expediency is the ground of right, then *interest* and *duty* are identical in idea, synonymes for the same thought. To prove a given action right, all that is necessary is to show that it is advantageous to the doer. The same act performed from the same motives, with

the same spirit and intentions, is right to one man and wrong to another; nay, is right to one and the same man at one time, and wrong at another, according as it turns out for his advantage or not. We can never be sure that we are acting virtuously until we know how the action is to affect our personal interests. Men have acted from the highest and purest principles, yet have been in reality far from virtuous, because what they did proved not for their own interests. They ought therefore to cherish feelings of self-reproach and remorse in view of their conduct.

2. It follows from this theory that there is no such thing as *intentional* wrong-doing. Men always act, it is said, from the principle of self-love. They do what they think is for their own advantage. Finding by experience that certain actions tend to their advantage, they come to regard such actions as right, and the opposite, for the same reason, as wrong. What have we here for a syllogism!

Man acts always with reference to his own good. To act with reference to one's own good, is to act right. Therefore, man invariably acts right! He may mistake, and do what is in the end disadvantageous; but it was a mistake, an error of judgment, and not an *intentional* wrong. This is, on the whole, a very favorable view of things, and may serve to relieve somewhat the sombre aspect in which the world and poor erring human nature present themselves to a certain class of minds. Men are not so bad, after all. They do as well as they know how. They *mean* to be selfish and to consult their own interests, and if they sometimes come short of duty in this respect, it is an error of the head and not of the heart.

3. It follows, also, that there is no such thing as *disinterested virtue*. Utility is the ground of rectitude, the foundation of obligation. We ought, therefore, to give a man credit for his conduct, just in proportion as we perceive him to have been governed throughout by a regard to his own personal advantage. To act thus is to act right, and to comply with the claims of duty. There can be no virtue which springs not from this source. The more fully a man promotes his own interests and seeks his own personal advantage in all he does, provided only there be no direct violation of the rights of others, the higher esteem ought we to cherish for that man in our hearts. On the other hand, where an action is of such a nature that we are not quite sure whether the man *was really seeking his own advantage*, or that of *others*, in what he did, we ought to withhold our approbation.

But, strange to say, selfish as the world is, it does not so decide. It does sensibly diminish our moral approbation of any act to see, or suspect even, that self-interest was the leading motive of conduct; it heightens our admiration and esteem to perceive that the act was performed without the least regard to that, but from entirely different motives.

And this leads us to remark, in general, that the theory under consideration *contradicts the facts of consciousness*. If utility were the ground of moral obligation, the foundation of right, then whenever we recognize such obligation we should be *conscious* of this element as the basis of it; should be conscious of perceiving the tendency of the given act to promote the personal happiness or the personal advantage of the doer, and that our conviction of obligation in the case

arose from that circumstance ; whereas, in fact, we are conscious of no such thing, but, in many cases, of directly the reverse. The sense of obligation exists, not only irrespective of the idea of happiness or of advantage to be derived from the given act, but often in opposition to it ; the desire of happiness or of personal advantage drawing us in one direction, the sense of obligation in another. It is not true that duty and interest are identical. We have different names for them, we mean different things by them. We are conscious of acting, now from one, now from the other, of these principles. It is not true that men never intentionally do what they know to be wrong. This was the capital defect in the ethical system of Socrates, and also of Plato, who make virtue a matter of science, and sin to be merely ignorance. Whose consciousness does not testify the opposite of this ? Who will not say with Ovid :

“ Video meliora, proboque, deteriora sequor ” ;

or with Euripides : I know that what I am about to do is evil, but desire is stronger than my deliberations.” Surely the poets in this case are more nearly right than the philosophers. Who has not reason to say with Paul : “ That which I do, I allow not.”

Neither is it true that we act always from personal and selfish considerations. We are conscious of the opposite, conscious of doing that which is right, *because* it is right, and not for the sake of personal advantage. Nor in such cases is the verdict of conscience against us ; but, on the contrary, it is precisely such actions that draw forth the testimony of her warmest approbation ; so far from reproaching us for not acting with

more direct and uniform reference to our own advantage, conscience more frequently condemns us for having acted from no higher principle.

We cannot but regard the facts of consciousness, then, as altogether at variance with the theory under consideration.

Suppose, now, we give the term utility a still wider extension, meaning by it, not the advantage of the *individual* merely, but the good of the *greatest number*; does it become, in this sense, the foundation of right and of moral obligation? There are still insuperable objections.

In the first place, how can it always be known what *will* promote the interests of the greatest number? The tendencies and results of actions are often hidden from human perspicacity. We do not know how they will affect the interests of any considerable number of persons. A laborious calculation of consequences would in most cases be necessary in order to such a conclusion, and even then, we could never arrive at certainty, never be sure that our reasonings and conclusions were correct. We should be in suspense, therefore, as to the morality of actions, unable to decide whether they are right or wrong, until we could first know their ultimate bearing on the general welfare. Such a calculation of consequences is quite beyond the capacity of the mass; only the more enlightened and far-seeing are competent to form such judgments, and even they, not with any certainty. Only the few, therefore, are competent to form ideas of right or wrong, and apply them to human conduct, while the vast multitude are left without any such faculty to guide them.

Furthermore, it may be justly objected to this theory,



in the form in which it is now stated, that it is directly at variance with the facts in the case. As a matter of fact, we *do not* always calculate the consequences of an action before we pronounce it, in our minds, right or wrong. We are conscious of no such procedure. We do not stop to know what bearing it is likely to have on the public welfare. We do not raise the question at all. We neither know nor care. Instinctively we decide as to the propriety and rightness of the given act; we approve and condemn without reference to consequences, and on other grounds than that of expediency.

It is fatal to this theory of utility, in whatever form it is stated, whether as referring to the happiness of the individual or the happiness of the community, to the advantage of the individual, or the advantage of all, that, so far from being conscious ordinarily of any such considerations, in our estimate of the morality of actions, we are conscious of quite the opposite. Our moral decisions are often pronounced under circumstances which preclude the *possibility* of all such prudential considerations. Narrate to a child, just old enough to understand you, some story of flagrant injustice and wrong; the flush of indignation, the glow of resentment, are visible at once on that cheek; the decision of that moral nature, its verdict of disapproval and condemnation, is to be read at once in that eye, that brow, that clenched hand, the whole mien and aspect of the miniature man. Has it been calculating the expediency and utility of the thing, the consequences to society of what its outraged nature condemns?

But there is a further objection to making utility, in any of its significations, the ground of moral obligation.

It is, that all these principles, as thus applied, virtually *presuppose* the existence of moral obligation, and therefore cannot be the ground of it. I perceive such a course to be conducive to happiness; therefore, says the advocate of this view: I am under obligation to pursue that course. But why *therefore*? Why *ought*? Suppose I choose to do that which is *not* on the whole for my happiness; what then? Whose business is it but my own? Either there is no manner of obligation in that case, or else it lies out of and back of the principle now supposed. The same may be said of utility in the sense of advantage. It presupposes an obligation to do what is seen to be useful and advantageous, and the question still remains: what is the *ground* of that obligation which the doctrine of utility presupposes?

2. Let us look now at the theory which places the foundation of moral obligation on the ground of *positive enactment*. Laws have been made, human and divine, requiring, forbidding, etc. Hence our approval and condemnation of actions and our conviction of obligation. The just and the unjust, the right and the wrong, in human conduct, are simply its conformity, or want of conformity, to law.

Of those who take this ground, some look no higher than to human enactment as the ground of rectitude and the foundation of moral obligation. The laws of man make the right and wrong of things, and are the sufficient and ultimate standard of morals. There is no higher law. No other reason need be given, why I should do or not do a given thing, than that the laws of *my country* require it.

Such among the ancients was the doctrine of Epicurus and of the Sophists. Plato, in the "De Legibus," and



Aristotle, in his "Ethics," make mention of the doctrine as maintained by some in their day.

Among the moderns, Gassendi and Hobbes are almost the only writers of distinction who have had the boldness to avow, and the consistency to maintain, a doctrine at once so shameless, so obnoxious to the common sense and common honesty of mankind, and so destructive of the first principles of morality. Occasionally, indeed, the spectacle is presented of some one, more patriotic than discreet, who in his zeal to defend the constitution and laws of his country, so far forgets himself, in the pressure of the exigency, as to take the general position that the laws of the land are, to us, the final court of appeal, and that we are to look no higher for authority. Even such persons, it is to be presumed, are not fully aware of the true nature and legitimate consequences of this doctrine, nor of the company they keep in maintaining such a position. They would shrink, it is to be hoped, from the doctrine, reduced to its simple elements, and affirmed as a principle in ethics, that *might makes right*, a sentiment that even a German rationalist has pronounced *infernal*; and from the atheism that discards the Deity, and overlooks the moral nature of man, while proclaiming human law as the standard of morals and the foundation of right.

If it were of any use to reason against a doctrine so little deserving the name of philosophy or the notice of a calm reply it were sufficient, perhaps, to ask how it is possible on this principle, since law is itself the source and foundation of right, to compare one law or code with another: those of Draco, e.g. with those of Solon or Lycurgus; the edicts of Nero with those of Constantine; and because one system is mild and humane,

another barbarous and inhuman, pronounce one to be more right and just than the other. If law is its own authority, if it makes right, if back of it there is no appeal, no ultimate standard of rectitude, then, of course, everything which is once enacted, and obtains the sanction of established law, is right and binding, no matter what it may be — one equally so with another, — and it is absurd to make a distinction between them. The commands of the veriest despot are as just and right, as obligatory on the conscience, as those of the wisest and mildest ruler. Law is law ; and that ends the matter. A law morally wrong is an impossibility, an absurdity. Inasmuch as laws vary, moreover, in different lands, what is right in one country is wrong when you cross a river or a mountain ; what is a virtue in Holland, is a sin in Belgium.

Much more reasonable and philosophical is the view of those who regard the *divine* will and law as the foundation of moral rectitude. This view was maintained by Occam among the scholastics, by Paley and many others among the moderns. Yet, even to this view, insuperable objections arise :

1. If this view be correct then we have only to suppose the will of Deity to change, and what is now wrong becomes instantly right ; the good and the bad, the virtuous and the vicious, change characters at once. We have only to suppose him other than he is, and to have commanded other than he has, to have reversed the decalogue, and the things now commanded would then have been wrong, and the things now forbidden would have been right. Murder, adultery, false witness, theft, covetousness, would have been virtues, commendable and obligatory ; while to honor our parents, and

to love our neighbor as ourselves, would have been morally wrong. In other words, there is no difference in respect of moral character between these actions in themselves considered ; the difference lies wholly in the fact that one is commanded and the other forbidden ; they are right or wrong, only as they are, or are not, the will of Deity.

It is no answer to this, to say that God is holy, and therefore will not command that which is evil ; nor, that he is immutable, and therefore will not change ; the question is not as to the *matter of fact*, but as to what *would* be true in case he and his law were not what they are. If it were possible for God to throw around sin the sanction of his law, would it, because of that sanction, *cease* to be sin and become holiness ? Does the rightness of an act consist wholly and simply in its being lawful ?

2. It follows also, that, had there been no divine law to establish the character of actions, human conduct had been neither virtuous nor vicious, neither good nor bad, but all actions would have been alike indifferent : to hate our neighbor, to take his property, his good name, or his life, would have been not only allowable, but equally as commendable and meritorious as the opposite. Nothing would have been unjust, nothing wrong.

3. There is no propriety or sense in speaking of God's law as just and good, in affirming that his statutes are right, his commandments holy, etc. ; for moral approbation is wholly misplaced and uncalled for. It is without meaning. For, if there is no standard of right and no ground of obligation but the law itself, how can its requirements be any other than right and binding,

whatever they may be? To say that his statutes are just and right, is to say, simply, that his statutes are his statutes. More than this; when we speak of the law as holy, just, etc., do we not attribute a moral character to the law itself? But how can this be? If the law creates moral distinctions, how can law itself possess a moral character; how can it be either right or wrong? This is to suppose right to exist before it was created.

4. Further: for the same reason we are shut out, on this principle, from attributing to Deity himself any moral character. Law is the foundation of right, and law is from God. Back of his will there is no law, and, of course, no ground of rectitude. God has himself, therefore, aside from his own law, no moral character, no virtue; for, beyond his own will and pleasure, there is no *law* imposing obligation, and constituting for him the right and the wrong. One thing is as right as another for him; everything is equally right; and, strictly speaking, nothing is for him either right or wrong. It is language without meaning when we say, with one of old: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God; just and true are all thy ways." Before he enacted the first law there was no such thing as right. It depended entirely on his pleasure whether to enact that law. There was no obligation to enact it, for no law as yet existed to create obligation. Suppose he had not done it. Right would not have existed; and of course, in that case, could not have pertained to the Divine character. Not until he creates the right, by making law, can he, by any possibility, possess a moral character; and even then it is a moral character which he himself creates, and imposes upon himself by arbitrary enactment.

Had he made a law precisely the reverse of the actual one, it would have been equally right and binding, and himself equally holy. But it is difficult to see how the thing made can put the maker himself under obligation ; how, from his own work, he can derive the foundation of a character which he had not in himself prior to the work. It is difficult to estimate the intrinsic excellence of that holiness which owes its origin to a purely arbitrary enactment ; which might just as well never have been made, or have been entirely other than, and the reverse of, what it is ; a holiness which, when strictly viewed, amounts merely to this — that the being who possesses it *does what he does*.

It may be supposed, perhaps, by some that the divine law, while it may not absolutely create the distinction of right and wrong, does nevertheless create the *obligation* on our part to do, or not to do, the things required ; that it is to me the sufficient reason why I ought to do thus and thus. This is a view entitled to a careful consideration. I must do thus, *because* such is the will of Deity. The question is now as to this word *because*. Granting that the will of Deity is as affirmed, what has that to do with my conduct ; wherein and how does that place me under obligation to do what the Deity wills ? Where lies the binding power of the law itself ? Manifestly not *in itself as law*, but in something else. There must be something to make the law binding, or it can bring with it no obligation to obedience on my part. And in saying this, we really abandon the position that law is, itself, the basis of obligation.

This something we may find in one of three things : It may be in the *character* of the law given ; a holy, just, and good law, and one which we ought therefore



to obey. But this is to place the ground of obligation, not in the law itself, but in something else, viz. moral rectitude. I am bound to obey, not because there is a law, but because there is a *holy* and *just* law.

Or we may refer the binding power of the law to the *relation* which the Deity sustains to us. He is our creator, preserver, benefactor, and as such has the right, it is said, to control and govern us. But does this, we reply, give him the right to govern and control *irrespective* of *moral distinctions*? If it does, then right and wrong are the mere arbitrary creations of his will; a view which we have already considered, and rejected. If it does not, then the ultimate ground of obligation is to be found in the *rectitude* of the divine requirements. In either case, it is not the law itself that constitutes the obligation.

Does, then, that which constitutes the binding force of the divine law consist in this: that the Deity is in himself such a being as he is, the greatest, the wisest, the best; and therefore his will is obligatory on other beings? This again is to recognize moral distinctions as lying back of the law itself, and as giving to that law its character and its force. When you say that God is good, just, holy, the best of beings, and on that account ought to be obeyed, you abandon the position that law itself creates moral distinctions, and that it contains in itself the ground of obligation. His being and nature are prior to his law, and the foundation of it; and if his being and nature are themselves good, then certainly it is not his law that makes them so: and if it is from them that our obligation to obedience springs then certainly not from the law itself.

Whatever view we take, then, of this matter, we are



compelled to give up the position that the divine law is the ground of moral obligation. An action is right, not *because* God wills it; on the contrary, *he wills it because it is right*.

The distinction between the rightness and the lawfulness of an act is admitted by some who still place obligation on the ground of law. This is the case with Chalmers. In general it may be remarked, that no writer breathes, throughout, a higher moral tone and purpose, or utters truth with more eloquence and earnestness than he. His style is an avalanche broken loose, a sea of expression, rolling sentence after sentence, wave upon wave, with a loftiness and force quite irresistible. It is the style of the orator, however, rather than of the philosopher, indicating fervor and strength of feeling, rather than precision and clearness of thought. There is a certain nobleness of sentiment that wins our admiration. We feel sure that some leviathan is ploughing up those waters, and making them to boil; but it is a leviathan not willing to be caught and classified for purposes of science. In the present case, Dr. Chalmers, if we understand him, derives *obligation* from the divine law, but *right* from the divine character; thus separating the two. While he rejects the view of Paley, that makes the divine command the foundation of right, he still makes that command the foundation of our *obligation to do the right*. Not until Deity interposes with his authority in its behalf, does the right become obligatory.

It is difficult to perceive the justice of this distinction. In the first place, it limits the term *obligation* to a strictly forensic use, a sense to which it is by no means restricted. A wider sense belongs to it. We are under

obligation, ethically speaking, to do many things not specifically required by law. But more than this, it seems to *divorce* obligation from right, as if right did not carry in itself a corresponding obligation, but was dependent on law to come in and give it authority; or as if, on the other hand, obligation might sometimes, or might at least be supposed to, run counter to right.

We cannot think such a distinction either necessary or allowable. On the contrary, we regard right and obligation as co-extensive, and on a common basis. The foundation and origin of the one is also the source and foundation of the other. Given: the right, and there is given along with it the obligation to do the right. We cannot conceive them separate; the former without the latter; a right thing which we are under no obligation to do, or a wrong thing which we are under no obligation to avoid. This obligation is universal, absolute, complete. Law cannot add to it, or make it more perfect than it already is. Law may indicate and enforce, but cannot create, moral obligation. Show me that a thing is *right*, and you show me a reason, and the best of all reasons, why I *ought* to do it. The moment I perceive the rightness, I perceive also the obligation. If the one is founded in law, so is the other; if the divine character is the foundation of the one, it is the ground of the other also.

It is admitted that in respect to matters in themselves indifferent, as for instance the ceremonies of a ritual observance, law may impose an obligation not previously existing. But such is not the case now under consideration. We are concerned in this discussion, only with such matters as come under the cognizance of the moral faculty, as being in themselves right or wrong;

and the question is : What *constitutes* the obligation to do, not a thing indifferent, but a thing which we perceive and know to be right ? Our answer is : the very *rightness* constitutes the obligation. The question returns then : on what does the *rightness* depend ? Not on utility, not on law. An action is right, not because expedient, but expedient because right. It is right, not *because* God wills it ; on the contrary, *he wills it because it is right*. What then constitutes rightness ?

3. It may be said that right and wrong lie not in any of these things ; not in the pursuit of happiness or of personal advantage ; not in law, human or Divine ; but in the nature and character of God himself. This, as we have already stated, is the view of Chalmers. It is the view, also, of many others. We have discussed so fully the previous theories that there is no need of dwelling long upon this. The same objections that lie against the theory of divine law, as the source of obligation and the ground of right, apply with equal force to this view. God's law is but the expression of his will ; and his will is but the expression and transcript of his character. It is his nature in action. To say that his law constitutes right, then, is virtually saying, in another form, that his nature and character are the ground of right ; and whatever objections lie against the one view are, in reality, equally objections to the other.

If right or wrong depend, ultimately, on the character of God, then we have only to suppose God to change, or to have been originally other than he is, and our duties and obligations change at once : that which was a virtue becomes a crime ; that which is a crime is transformed into a virtue. Had he been precisely the reverse of what he is, he had still been, as now, the

source of right, and his own character would have been as truly good and just and right as it is now. This is, virtually, to rob him of all moral character. We may still say that he is holy, and that his ways are right; but we mean by it only this, when we come to explain: that he is what he is, and does what he does. The holiness of his acts consists, not at all in the essential character of the acts themselves, but only in the circumstance that they are *his* acts.

It does not meet this objection to say that God *is* holy — holy by a necessity of his nature, and that he can never be otherwise; that is not the question; but simply, whether his being what he is, is the ground of all rectitude and of all obligation; whether that which he does is right *because it conforms to his character*, or whether his character is holy *because it conforms to the right*. This is a very important distinction.

We have this objection, then, to the view which resolves virtue into the Divine character, and makes right inherent originally in the Divine nature; that while it seeks to honor God by making him the source of all excellence, it really takes away from his character the highest excellence and glory that can pertain to it, that of conforming to the right.<sup>1</sup>

4. We seem to be driven, then, to the only remaining conclusion, that right and wrong are distinctions immutable, and inherent in the nature of things. They are not the creations of expediency nor of law; nor yet do they originate in the Divine character. They have *no* origin: they are eternal as the throne of Deity; they are immutable as God himself. Nay, were God himself to change, these distinctions would change not. Our

<sup>1</sup> See note (A.) at the end of this Article.

nipotence has no power over them, whether to create or to destroy. Law does not make them, but they make law. They are the source and spring of all law and all obligation. Reason points out these distinctions ; the moral nature recognizes and approves them. . God's law and will and nature are in conformity to these distinctions ; else that law were not just and right, nor that nature holy. Our moral nature is in conformity to these distinctions ; hence, we approve and disapprove, as we do, the various actions of men. The deeds are right, not *because* we approve them ; on the contrary, we approve them *because they are right*. They are right, not *because* they are commanded , but they are commanded *because they are right*.

There is a sense in which Deity himself is subject to this eternal and immutable law of right. There are things which it would not be right for even Deity to do. So fully does his moral nature approve the right and abhor the wrong, that the Scriptures declare it impossible for him to do evil. There is no purity like his ; no approval of the right, no condemnation and abhorrence of the wrong, so strong and intense as his in the whole universe. This his moral nature is to him a law, the highest possible and conceivable, placing him under obligation, not indeed to another, but to himself, to adhere ever to the eternal principles of right and truth and justice.

In their anxiety to honor and exalt the Divine Being, some have shrunk from the idea that there is any law or obligation resting on the Deity to do one thing rather than another ; that there is, or can be, anything which it would be wrong for him to do. But which most honors and exalts God, to resolve the distinction



of right and wrong into the arbitrary decisions of his will, thus leaving him without moral character, or to regard that distinction as immutable and eternal, extending even to the throne and will of him who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters, and hangeth the earth upon nothing? Which most honors him, to make his nature and his will the foundation of right, or the eternal principles of right and justice the foundation of his character and his law? Which gives the noblest and most exalted conception of the Divine Being? Which of these two views imparts the loftier significance to that sublime anthem of the angels that goes up unceasingly before his throne, and shall yet go up from the entire universe: "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come;" and to that song of the redeemed that stand upon the sea of glass: "*Just and true* are thy ways, thou king of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?"

It may be said, perhaps, that to make right and wrong inherent in the nature of things is virtually to place their foundation and origin in God, since the nature of things depends, after all, on him. He who made all things is the author of their nature also.

This objection derives its force from the somewhat indefinite expression, "nature of *things*," a phrase used with great latitude of meaning. As used to denote material objects and their qualities, it is true that both *things*, and the nature of things, are the work of God. As used to denote finite intelligences, the same is true; they are the work of the Divine Intelligence, they and their original nature. But when we speak of things, and the nature of things, as applicable to this discussion we do not, of course, refer to material objects, nor yet



to spiritual intelligences, but to the actions and moral conduct of intelligent beings, created or uncreated, finite or infinite. We mean to say, that such and such acts of an intelligent voluntary agent, whoever he may be, are, in themselves, in *their very nature*, right or wrong. Now God does not create the actions of intelligent free agents, and, of course, does not create the nature of those actions. To say that the moral character of an act is created by Deity, is simply to beg the question in dispute.

When we say that right and wrong are inherent, then, in the very nature of things, we simply assert that certain courses of conduct are, in themselves, in their very nature and essence, wrong, certain others, right; that they are so, quite independent and irrespective of the consequences that result from them, or of the sanctions and authority with which they may be invested; that they are so, not because of the laws, either human or Divine, that give them force; that they would be so were there no law, or were it the opposite of what it is; that even the actions of Deity himself fall within the range of this universal principle; and that it does not depend on his will or even his nature, much less on his power as creator, to establish or abolish this immutable distinction.

We say it is in the very nature of things that the whole is greater than a part; that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points; that two straight lines cannot enclose a space. We cannot conceive the opposite to be true. It does not depend on the will of Deity whether these things shall be so or not. He does not create these relations. They are eternal and necessary truths. In like manner there are certain truths

pertaining to the conduct of all rational and intelligent beings, certain moral distinctions, which we regard as immutable and eternal, inherent in the very nature of things. And on this firm, eternal basis rests the foundation of our moral obligation.<sup>1</sup>

We have discussed, as yet, but two of the elements, or mental processes, into which our analysis resolved an act of conscience. It remains to notice briefly the third.

III. *The perception of merit and demerit, with the consequent approbation or censure of the agent.*

No sooner do we perceive an action to be right or wrong, and to involve, therefore, an obligation on the part of the doer, than there arises also in the mind the idea of merit or demerit in connection with the doing; we regard the agent as deserving of praise or blame, and in our own minds do approve or condemn him and his course accordingly. This approval or censure of ourselves and others, according to the apprehended desert of the act and the actor, constitutes a process of trial, an inner tribunal, at whose bar are constantly arraigned the various deeds of men, especially our own, and whose verdict it is no easy matter to set aside.

It is in point here to consider how far these decisions are correct and reliable; what authority they have for the control of the conduct; and what is their actual influence over us.

The question arises as to the correctness and reliability of the decisions of the moral faculty. This question, though pertaining directly to the final verdict of approval or condemnation, relates also to the previous perceptions on which that verdict is based, and so

<sup>1</sup> See note (B.) at the end of this Article.

covers, in fact, the entire ground of the operations of this faculty. The final verdict will be correct or not, according as the previous judgments are so. If conscience correctly discerns the right and the wrong, and the consequent obligation, she will be likely to judge correctly as to the deserts of the doer. If she mistake these points she may approve what is not worthy of approval, and condemn what is good.

How are we to know, then, whether conscience judges right? What voucher have we for her correctness? How far is she to be trusted in her perceptions and decisions? Perhaps we are so constituted, it may be said, as invariably to judge that to be right which is wrong, and the reverse, and so to approve where we should condemn. True, we reply, this may be so. It may be that I am so constituted that two and two shall *seem* to be four, when in reality they are five; and that the three angles of a triangle shall *seem* to be equal to two right angles, when in reality they are equal to three. This may be so. Still it is a presumption in favor of the correctness of all our natural perceptions, that they are the operation of original principles of our constitution. It is not probable, to say the least, that we are so constituted by the great author of our being as to be habitually deceived. It may be that the organs of vision and hearing are absolutely false; that the things which we see, and hear, and feel, through the medium of the senses, have no correspondence to our supposed perceptions. But this is not a probable supposition. He who denies the validity of the natural faculties, has the burden of proof; and proof is, of course, impossible, for the simple reason that, in order to prove them false, you must make use of these very

faculties; and if their testimony is not reliable in the one case, certainly it is not in the other. We must then take their veracity for granted; and we have the right to do so. And so of our moral nature. It comes from the Author of our being, and if it is uniformly and originally wrong, then he is wrong. It is an error which, in the nature of the case, can never be detected or corrected. We cannot get beyond our constitution, back of our natural endowments, to judge, *a priori*, and from an external position, whether they are correct or not. Right and wrong are not, indeed, the creations of the Divine will; but the faculties by which we perceive and approve the right and condemn the wrong are from him; and we must presume upon their general correctness.

It does not follow from this, however, nor do we affirm, that conscience is infallible, that she never errs. It does not follow that our moral perceptions and judgments are invariably correct because they spring from our native constitution. This is not so. There is not one of the faculties of the human mind that is not liable to err. Not one of its activities is infallible. The reasoning power sometimes errs; the judgment errs; the memory errs. The moral faculty is on the same footing, in this respect, with any and all other faculties.

But of what use, it will be said, is a moral faculty on which, after all, we cannot rely? Of what use, we reply, is *any* mental faculty that is not absolutely and universally correct? Of what use is a memory or a judgment that sometimes errs? We do not wholly distrust these faculties, or cast them aside as worthless. A time-keeper may be of great value, though not absolutely perfect. Its authorship and original construction

may be a strong presumption in favor of its general correctness; nevertheless, its hands may have been accidentally set to the wrong hour of the day.

This is a spectacle that not unfrequently presents itself in the moral world — a man with his conscience pointing to the wrong hour; a strictly conscientious man, fully and firmly persuaded that he is right, yet by no means agreeing with the general convictions of mankind; an hour or two before, or it may be, as much behind the age. Such men are the hardest of all mortals to be set right, for the simple reason that they are conscientious. "Here is my watch; it points to such an hour; and my watch is from the very best maker. I cannot be mistaken." And yet he is mistaken, and egregiously so. The truth is, conscience is no more infallible than any other mental faculty. It is simply, as we have seen, a power of perceiving and judging, and its operations, like all other perceptions and judgments, are liable to error.

And this which we have just said goes far to account for the great diversity that has long been known to exist in the moral judgments and opinions of men. It has often been urged, and with great force, against the supposed existence of a moral faculty in man, as a part of his original nature, that men think and act so differently with respect to these matters. Nature, it is said, ought to act uniformly; thus eyes and ears do not give essentially conflicting testimony, at different times, and in different countries, with respect to the same objects. Certain colors are universally pleasing, and certain sounds disagreeable. But not so, it is said, with respect to the moral judgments of men. What one approves, another condemns. If these distinctions are universal,



absolute, essential ; and if the power of perceiving them is inherent in our nature, men ought to agree in their perception of them. Yet you will find nothing approved by one age and people which is not condemned by some other ; nay, the very crimes of one age and nation are the religious acts of another. If the perception of right and wrong is intuitive, how happens this diversity ?

To which we reply, the thing has been already accounted for. Our ideas of right and wrong, it was stated in discussing their origin, depend on circumstances for their time and degree of development. They are not irrespective of opportunity. Education, habits, laws, customs, while they do not originate, still have much to do with the development and modification of these ideas. They may be by these influences aided or retarded in their growth, or even quite misdirected, just as a tree may by unfavorable influences be hindered and thwarted in its growth, be made to turn and twist, and put forth abnormal and monstrous developments. Yet nature works there, nevertheless, and, in spite of all such obstacles and unfavorable circumstances, seeks to put forth, according to her laws, her perfect and finished work. All that we contend is, that nature under favorable circumstances develops in the human mind the idea of moral distinctions, while, at the same time, *men may differ much in their estimate of what is right and what is wrong*, according to the circumstances and influences surrounding them. To apply the distinction of right and wrong to particular cases, and decide as to the morality of given actions, is an office of judgment, and the judgment may err in this, as in any other of its operations. It may be biassed by



unfavorable influences, by wrong education, wrong habits, and the like.

The same is true, substantially, of all our natural faculties and their operations. They depend on circumstances for the degree of their development and the mode of their action. Hence they are liable to great diversity and frequent error. Perception misleads us as to sensible objects not seldom; even in their mathematical reasonings men do not always agree. There is the greatest possible diversity among men as to the retentiveness of the memory, and as to the extent and power of the reasoning faculties. The savage, that thinks it no wrong to scalp his enemy, or even to roast and eat him, is utterly unable to count twenty upon his fingers; while the philosopher, who recognizes the duty of loving his neighbor as himself, calculates with precision the motions of the heavenly bodies, and predicts their place in the heavens for ages to come. Shall we conclude, because of this diversity, that these several faculties are not parts of our nature?

We are by no means disposed to admit, however, that the diversity in men's moral judgments is so great as might at first appear. There is, on the contrary, a general uniformity. As to the great essential principles of morals, men, after all, do judge much alike in different ages and different countries. In details they differ; in general principles they agree. In the application of the rules of morality to particular actions they differ widely, according to circumstances; in the recognition of the right and the wrong as distinctive principles, and of obligation to do the right as known, and avoid the wrong as known, in this they agree. It must be remembered, moreover, that men do not always act

according to their own ideas of right. From the general neglect of virtue, in any age or community, and the prevalence of great and revolting crimes, we cannot safely infer the absence, or even the perversion, of the moral faculty.

It is important to bear in mind, throughout this discussion, the distinction between the idea of right, in itself considered, and the perception of a given act as right; the one a simple conception, the other an act of judgment; the one an idea derived from the very constitution of the mind, connate if not innate, the other an application of that idea by the understanding to particular instances of conduct. The former, the idea of moral distinctions, may be universal, necessary, absolute, unerring; the latter, the application of the idea to particular instances, and the decision that such and such acts are or are not right, may be altogether an incorrect and mistaken judgment. Now, it is precisely at this point that the diversity in the moral judgments of mankind makes its appearance. In recognizing the distinction of right and wrong, they agree; in the application of the same to particular instances, in deciding *what* is right and *what* is wrong — a simple act of the judgment, an exercise of the understanding, as we have said — in this it is that they differ. And the difference is no greater, and no more inexplicable, with respect to this, than in any other class of judgments.

We have admitted that conscience is not infallible. Is it then a safe guide? Are we in all cases to follow its decisions? Since liable to err, it cannot be in itself, we reply, in all cases, a safe guide. We cannot conclude with certainty that a given course is right simply because conscience approves it. This does not of

necessity follow. The decision that a given act is right, or not, is simply a matter of judgment ; and the judgment may or may not be correct. That depends on circumstances, on education partly, on the light we have, be it more or less. Conscientious men are not always in the right. We may do wrong conscientiously. Saul of Tarsus was a conscientious persecutor, and verily thought he was doing God service. No doubt many of the most intolerant and relentless bigots have been equally conscientious, and equally mistaken. Such men are all the more dangerous because doing what they believe to be right.

What, then, are we to do ? Shall we follow a guide thus liable to err ? Yes, we reply, follow conscience ; but see that it be a right and well-informed conscience, forming its judgments not from impulse, passion, prejudice, the bias of habit or of unreflecting custom, but from the clearest light of reason, and especially of the divine word. We are responsible for the judgments we form in morals as much as for any class of our judgments ; responsible, in other words, for the sort of conscience we have. Saul's mistake lay, not in acting according to his conscientious convictions of duty, but in not having a more enlightened conscience. He should have formed a more careful judgment, have inquired more diligently after the right way. To say, however, that a man ought not to do what conscience approves, is to say that he ought not to do what he sincerely believes to be right. This would be a very strange rule in morals.

Another point to be noticed, before we leave the subject, is the *power* of conscience, the influence which its verdicts of approval or condemnation exert over the

human mind. Very great is this power, as evinced in operation. We all know something of it, not only by the observation of others, but by the consciousness of our own inner life. In the testimony of a good conscience, in its calm, deliberate approval of our conduct, lies one of the sweetest and purest of the pleasures of life; a source of enjoyment whose springs are beyond the reach of accident or envy; a fountain in the desert, making glad the wilderness and the solitary place. It has, moreover, a sustaining power. The consciousness of rectitude, the approval of the still small voice within, that whispers, in the moment of danger and of weakness, "*You are right*," imparts to the fainting soul a courage and a strength that can come from no other source. Under its influence the soul is elevated above the violence of pain and the pressure of outward calamity. The timid become bold, the weak are made strong. Here lies the secret of much of the heroism that adorns the annals of martyrdom and of the church. Women and children, frail and feeble by nature, ill-fitted to withstand the force of public opinion, and shrinking from the very thought of pain and suffering, have calmly faced the angry reproaches of the multitude, and resolutely met death in its most terrific forms, sustained by the power of an approving conscience, whose decisions were to them of more consequence than the applause or censure of the world, and whose sustaining power bore them, as on a prophet's chariot of fire, above the pains of torture and the rage of infuriated men.

Not less is the power of an accusing conscience. Its disapprobation and censure, though clothed with no external authority, are more to be dreaded than the

frowns of kings or the approach of armies. It is a silent, constant presence, that cannot be escaped and will not be pacified. It embitters the happiness of life, cuts the sinews of the soul's inherent strength. It is a fire in the bones, burning when no man suspects but he only who is doomed to its endurance; a girdle of thorns worn next the heart, concealed, it may be, from the eye of man, but giving the wearer no rest day nor night. Its accusations are not loud; but to the guilty soul they are terrible, penetrating her inmost recesses and making her to tremble as the forest trembles at the roar of the enraged lion, as the deep sea trembles in her silent depths when her Creator goeth by on the wings of the tempest and the God of glory thundereth. The bold, bad man hears that accusing voice, and his strength departs from him. The heart that is inured to all evil, and grown hard in sin, and fears not the face of man nor the law of God, hears it, and becomes as the heart of a child.

How terrible is remorse! that worm that never dies, that fire that never goes out. We cannot follow the human soul beyond the confines of its present existence. But it is an opinion entertained by some, and in itself not improbable, that in the future conscience will act with greatly increased power. When the causes that now conspire to prevent its full development and perfect action shall operate no longer; when the tumult of the march and the battle are over; when the cares, the pleasures, the temptations, the vain pursuits that now distract the mind with their confused uproar shall die away in the distance and cease to be heard; in the stillness of eternity, in the silence of a purely spiritual existence, the still small voice of conscience may per-

haps be heard as never before. In the busy daytime we catch at intervals the sound of the distant ocean as a low and gentle murmur. In the still night, when all is hushed, we hear it beating in heavy and constant surges on the shore. And thus it may be with the power of conscience in the future.



## NOTES.

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### NOTE A. — Page 156.

No doubt the divine character embodies the highest conception we can form of moral excellence, and that is most nearly perfect which most nearly conforms to that character. But why is it so? Is it not because that character is itself conformed to the right? Were it otherwise, and the supposition is allowable, were that character malevolent instead of benevolent, would that malevolent nature then be the standard of right? Would selfishness and hate be virtue, and love and compassion be vice? Manifestly not. Manifestly it is only because the divine nature is what it is, that it stands forth to our conception as the practical embodiment of right. But this is not making the divine nature or character the ground of right; on the contrary, it is supposing a standard to which the divine character itself conforms. This we do whenever we ascribe moral character to God — when we say that he is holy, that he is just, that he is good. It is not the divine nature, but the idea of right, that is ultimate in our conceptions when we thus speak.

Dr. Hopkins, in his moral science, resolves all moral distinctions into the character of God, distinguishing between character and nature, and objecting to the term “nature of Deity” as implying a sort of necessity inconsistent with freedom. By the character of God he means, if I understand him, the moral choices and preferences, in other words the will of Deity, in distinction from anything lying back of and leading to those volitions. “It may be that what we must reach in our ultimate analysis,” he says, “is a free personality, a person with no nature, or fate, or fitnesses of things back of him, or above him,” etc. “So in our search backward for the origin of moral distinctions, we shall find not any nature of things, not any nature of God, not any necessary and eternal principles, but simply the character of God” (Moral Science, pp. 239, 240).

But does God in choosing thus act arbitrarily and without a reason? When he thus, as a free person, prefers virtue to vice, benevo-

lence to selfishness, is there no reason in the nature of the case, no intrinsic difference in the nature of these principles themselves, why he thus chooses? Might he just as well have chosen the opposite? or is there a difference between benevolence and selfishness in their very nature, and does God choose in view of that difference? If the latter, then the ultimate ground of moral distinctions lies not in the divine character, but in the essential nature and differences of things.

NOTE B. — Page 160.

As the doctrine which places the foundation of moral obligation in the very nature of things has been regarded by some as of recent origin, it may be well to glance at the history of opinions on this whole matter. And first as to the opposite theory.

The opinion that moral distinctions are purely factitious, having their foundation not in nature, but in the customs of society or the edicts of legislation, human or divine, is by no means without authority, nor is it of modern origin. Plato, in the tenth book of the *De Legibus*, speaks of those who maintained that nothing was naturally just, τὸ δίκαιον οὐδ' εἶναι φύσει, but whatever is decreed that for the time is right and binding, made so by art and law, but not by any nature of its own, ἀλλ' οὐ δὴ τινι φύσει. In the *Theætetus* also he speaks of the opinion as held not by the disciples of Protagoras alone, but by many other philosophers, and that very confidently; that things just and unjust have not in the nature of them any being or essence of their own, but derive their authority from the general consent.

Aristotle also, in his *Ethics*, notices the same opinion, and ascribes it to the fact that the things prescribed by law as right and just are so variable and uncertain, whereas that which is natural is immutable (*Lib. i. cap. 1*, and also *Lib. v. cap. 10*).

Plato mentions by name several philosophers as particularly noted for this opinion; Diogenes Laertius mentions others. Archelaus the teacher of Socrates is of this number, holding that τὸ δίκαιον εἶναι καὶ τὸ αἰσχροὺς οὐ φύσει ἀλλὰ νόμῳ, the just and the dishonorable are so not by nature, but by law. Aristippus, the contemporary of Plato, is represented as holding the same view, that nothing is by nature good or evil, but only by law and custom. Anaxarchus, according to Plutarch, consoles Alexander in his remorse for the

murder of Clitus, with the assurance that whatever is done by the ruler is right; in other words, "the king can do no wrong." Pyrrho, the founder of the sceptical school, also taught that nothing is, in truth, just or unjust, good or bad, but men do all things by law and custom.

The most prominent assertor of this doctrine however, seems to have been Protagoras, who makes all things to be phenomenal and relative, nothing in itself true, but only as it seems to the observer to be this or that. He is repeatedly cited by Plato as affirming that whatever things to any city seem to be just and good, the same are so to that city, so long as they seem so.

Epicurus also denies the essential and immutable nature of justice and injustice, right and wrong, and teaches that these things are nothing in themselves, but arise wholly from the compacts which men make for their own convenience and advantage. Carneades zealously maintained the same doctrine.

In modern times Gassendi and Hobbes have resolutely advocated the same opinion, the latter repeatedly affirming that in the state of nature nothing is either just or unjust, nothing right or wrong, but that it belongs to the state, the government, to determine what shall be just, and what unjust or wrong (*De Cive*, and *Leviathan*).

Among the scholastic theologians of the middle ages, we find traces also of the same general view, denying that anything is intrinsically and naturally just or unjust, good or evil, but referring all such distinctions to the arbitrary will and pleasure of the Supreme Being. Thus Ockham and his followers: *Nullum actum malum esse nisi quatenus a deo prohibitum, et qui non possit fieri bonus si a deo precipiatur; et e converso*. In more recent times such writers as Hume, Hutcheson, Paley, Bentham, Mill, followed by some theologians of note, have sought to place the foundation of moral obligation in utility or expediency.

On the other hand, in favor of the doctrine which we maintain, that moral distinctions are eternal and immutable in their nature, absolute and not relative and phenomenal, founded not in the laws and customs of men, nor yet in the arbitrary will of God, but in the very nature of things, may be found, both among philosophers and theologians, names of the highest authority and in the greatest number.

Not to mention the schools of ancient philosophy of highest worth, the Platonic and Aristotelian systems agreeing in this, but confining ourselves to the philosophical and theological writers of modern

times, we may cite the following: Cudworth, Price, Clarke, Butler, Reid, Stewart, Wardlaw, Macintosh, Robert Hall, Chalmers, Charnock, Edwards, Bellamy, Dwight, Emmons, McCosh.

In the treatise "concerning eternal and immutable morality," Cudworth maintains the position "that it is so far from being true, that all moral good and evil, just and unjust, are mere arbitrary and factitious things, that are created wholly by will; that (if we would speak properly) we must needs say that nothing is morally good or evil, just or unjust by mere will without nature, because everything is what it is by nature and not by will." And again "that it is not possible that any command of God or man should oblige otherwise than by virtue of that which is *φύσει δίκαιον*, naturally just. And though particular promises and commands be made by will, yet it is not will but nature that obligeth to the doing of things promised and commanded, or makes them debita, such things as ought to be done." For mere will cannot change the moral nature of acting, nor the nature of intellectual beings" (Immutable Morality, pp. 14, 18).

In his "Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God," Dr. Samuel Clarke thus argues: "From what hath been said upon this head it follows, that the true ground and foundation of all eternal moral obligations, is this; (namely the forementioned necessary and eternal different relations which different things bear one to another; and the consequent fitness or unfitness of the application of different things, or different relations one to another, unavoidably arising from that difference of the things themselves); these very same reasons, I say, which always and necessarily do determine the will of God, as hath been before shown, ought also constantly to determine the will of all subordinate intelligent beings . . . . They who found all moral obligations ultimately in the will of God, must recur at length to the same thing, only with this difference that they do not clearly explain how the nature and will of God himself must be necessarily good and just, as I have endeavored to do. They who found all moral obligations only upon laws made for the good of societies hold an opinion, which (besides that 'tis fully confuted by what has been already said concerning the eternal and necessary difference of things) is moreover so directly and manifestly contradictory and inconsistent with itself, that it seems strange it should not have been more commonly taken notice of. For if there be no difference between good and evil, antecedent to all laws, there can be no reason given why any laws should be made at all, when all things are nat-

erally indifferent. To say that laws are necessary to be made for the good of mankind, is confessing that certain things tend to the good of mankind, that is, to the preserving and perfecting of their nature, which wise men therefore think necessary to be established by laws. And if the reason why certain things are established by wise and good laws, is because those things tend to the good of mankind, 'tis manifest they were good, antecedent to their being confirmed by laws. Otherwise, if they were not good antecedent to all laws, 'tis evident there could be no reason why such laws should be made, rather than the contrary, which is the greatest absurdity in the world" (Demonstration, etc. pp. 124, 125).

To the same effect Charnocke thus discourses: "The moral law is not properly a mere act of God's will considered in itself, or a tyrannical edict, like those of whom it may well be said, '*stat pro ratione voluntas*,' but it commands those things which are good in their own nature, and prohibits those things which are in their own nature evil; and therefore is an act of his wisdom and righteousness, the result of his wise counsel, and an extract of his pure nature; as all the laws of just lawgivers are not only the acts of their will, but of a will governed by reason and justice, and for the good of the public whereof they are conservators. If the moral commands of God were only acts of his will, and had not an intrinsic necessity, reason, and goodness, God might have commanded quite the contrary, and made a contrary law, whereby that which we now call vice, might have been canonized for virtue; he might then have forbid any worship of him, love to him, fear of his name; he might then have commanded murders, thefts, adulteries" (Existence and Attributes of God, p. 50).

President Edwards holds the following language: "Others say, the will of God is the primary foundation of moral obligation. But the will of God is either benevolent or not. If it be benevolent, and on that account the foundation of moral obligation, it is not the source of obligation merely because it is the will of God, but because it is benevolent, and is of a tendency to promote happiness, and this places the foundation of obligation in a tendency to happiness, and not primarily in the will of God. But if the will of God, and that which is the expression of it, the divine law, be allowed to be not benevolent, and yet are the foundation of obligation, we are obliged to conform to them whatever they be, however malevolent or opposite to holiness and goodness the requirements be. But this, I pre-



sume, none will pretend. If the will or law of God be the primary foundation or reason of our obligation to virtue, it is the primary rule and standard of virtue, and therefore right in itself, whatever it be, however malicious, envious or tyrannical; which is absurd. On the supposition that the will or law of God is the primary foundation, reason, and standard of right and virtue, every attempt to prove the moral perfections or attributes of God is absurd; for in every such attempt the idea which the author of that attempt has of right is set up as the rule or standard of right; and the divine attributes are compared with it, and proved, or attempted to be proved, to be conformed to it. But if the divine will, or which is the same, the divine moral attributes, be the primary standard of right, all we have to do is to inquire what that will is, and whatever it is, whether benevolent or malevolent, it is the standard of right, the pattern of virtue, and the source of obligation" (Works, Vol. ii. p. 541).

Perhaps no one of the great American divines has more clearly and fully expressed himself on this matter than Dr. Bellamy, the friend and pupil of Edwards: "If we should suppose (as some do), that there is nothing right or wrong antecedent to a consideration of the positive will and law of God, the great Governor of the world, and that right and wrong result, originally, from his sovereign will and absolute authority entirely, then these absurdities would unavoidably follow:

"1. That the moral perfections of God are empty names, without any significance at all. For if there be no intrinsic moral fitness and unfitness in things, no right nor wrong, then there is no such thing as moral beauty or moral deformity, and so no foundation in the nature of things for any moral propensity; that is, there is nothing for God to love or hate, considered as a moral agent. There can be no inclination or disposition in him to love right or hate wrong, if there be no such thing as right and wrong. . . . .

"2. That in the nature of things there is no more reason to love and obey God than there is to hate and disobey him, there being, in the nature of things, no right nor wrong. Just as if God was not infinitely worthy of our highest esteem and most perfect obedience; and just as if, in the nature of things, there was no reason why we should love and obey him, but merely because he is the greatest and strongest, and says we must — than which nothing can be more evidently absurd. But if these things are so, then it will follow,

"3. That there is no reason why he should require his creatures to



love and obey him, or forbid the contrary; or why he should reward the one or punish the other, there being, in the nature of things, no right nor wrong; and so the foundation of God's law is overturned, and all religion torn up by the roots, and nothing is left but arbitrary tyranny and servile subjection."

He then proceeds to consider the theory "that there is nothing right or wrong antecedent to a consideration of the general good of the whole system of intelligent created beings; and that right and wrong result originally and entirely from the natural tendency of things to promote or hinder the general good of the whole"; from which he deduces the following "manifest absurdities":

"1. That the moral perfections of God entirely consist in or result from a disposition to love his creatures supremely, and seek their happiness as his only end."

"2. That God loves virtue and rewards it merely because it tends to make his creatures happy, and hates vice and punishes it merely because it tends to make his creatures miserable."

"3. That he requires us to love and obey him merely because it tends to make us happy, and forbids the contrary merely because it tends to make us miserable."

"4. That we are under no obligations to love God, but merely because it tends to make us happy, and that it is no crime to hate and blaspheme God, but merely because it tends to make us miserable."

"From all which," he concludes, "it is evident, to demonstration, that right and wrong do neither result from the mere will and love of God, nor from any tendency of things to promote or hinder the happiness of God's creatures. It remains therefore, that there is an intrinsic moral fitness and unfitness, absolutely, in things themselves, as that we should love the infinitely glorious God, is, in the nature of things, infinitely fit and right; and to hate and blaspheme him, is, in the nature of things, infinitely unfit and wrong; and that antecedent to any consideration of advantage or disadvantage, reward or punishment, or even of the will or law of God. And hence it is that God infinitely loves right and hates wrong, and appears so infinitely engaged to reward the one and punish the other. And hence his law and government are holy, just and good". (Works, Vol. i. pp. 36-38, note).

Dr. Dwight thus reasons. "If virtue and vice are such only because God willed them to be such, if virtue is excellent and vice

worthless only because he willed them to be so, then vice in itself is just as excellent as virtue, and virtue just as worthless as vice. Let me ask, can any man believe this to be true?

"Further, the supposition that virtue is founded in the will of God, implies that God willed virtue to be excellent without any reason. If virtue and vice had originally, or as they were seen by the eye of God, no moral difference in their nature, then there was plainly no reason why God should prefer, or why he actually preferred, one of them to the other. There was, for example, no reason why he chose and required that intelligent creatures should love him and each other, rather than that they should hate him and hate each other. In choosing and requiring that they should exercise this love, God acted, therefore, without any motive whatever; certainly no sober man will attribute this conduct to God." He proceeds to show that according to this doctrine it follows that the character of wicked men and of fiends is in itself just as lovely and excellent as that of angels; and if God had so willed it, Satan remaining in every respect the same as man, would have been morally excellent and lovely, and Gabriel morally worthless and detestable. "Must not he who can believe this doctrine," he asks, "as easily believe that if God had willed it two and two would have become five? Is it at all easier to believe that truth and falsehood can interchange their natures than that a square and a circle can interchange theirs?"

He also proceeds to show that on this principle the character and will of God are no longer excellent in their own nature, but merely because he determines that they are so. The question, therefore, respecting his moral nature, whether he is benevolent or malevolent, becomes merely nugatory, there being no original difference between the two things, but only such as he makes by an arbitrary act of will (*Theology*, Vol. iii. pp. 442-445).

The matter is set in a very clear light also by Dr. Emmons: "Everything has a nature which is peculiar to itself, and which is essential to its very existence. Light has a nature by which it is distinguished from darkness; sweet has a nature by which it is distinguished from bitter; animals have a nature by which they are distinguished from men; men have a nature by which they are distinguished from angels; angels have a nature by which they are distinguished from God; and God has a nature by which he is distinguished from all other beings. Now such different natures lay

a foundation for different obligations, and different obligations lay a foundation for virtue and vice in all their different degrees. As virtue and vice therefore, take their origin from the nature of things, so the difference between moral good and moral evil is as immutable as the nature of things from which it results. It is as impossible in the nature of things that the essential distinction between virtue and vice should cease, as that the essential distinction between light and darkness, bitter and sweet should cease. These distinctions do not depend upon the mere will of the Deity; for so long as he continues the nature of things, no law or command of his can change light into darkness, bitter into sweet, or virtue into vice. And this is what we mean by the assertion that virtue and vice are essentially different in the nature of things" (Works, Vol. iv. p. 144. Sermon x.).

"Wherein is it," says Dr. Chalmers, "that the rightness of morality lies? or whence is it that this rightness is derived? Whether, more particularly, it have an independent rightness of its own, or it be right only because God wills it? It might be proper to state that between the two terms of the alternative as last put, our clear preference, or rather our absolute and entire conviction, is on the side of the former. We hold that morality has a stable, inherent, and essential rightness in itself, and that anterior to or apart from, whether the tacit or expressed will of any being in the universe. . . . Now it is here that we join issue with our antagonists, and affirm that God is no more the creator of virtue than he is of truth; that justice and benevolence were virtues previous to any forthputting of will or jurisprudence on his part, and that he no more ordained them to be virtues than he ordained that the three angles of a triangle should be equal to two right angles" (Institutes of Theology, Vol. i. pp. 22, 23).

To the same effect McCosh: "All who have made ethics a subject of study must know how perilous it is to found virtue on the will of God. An action is holy not because God wills it, but he wills it because it is holy. The person who reverses this maxim may intend to benefit the cause of religion, but in reality he is doing it serious damage" (Divine Government, p. 324).

The student of English literature will hardly need to be reminded of the passage, too long for citation here, remarkable at once for its eloquence and its severity, in which Robert Hall, in his sermon on "The Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis," denounces the utilitarian theory of morals, in the course of which, after contrasting that

theory with the more sensible, rational views of the preceding age, and of the ancient philosophers, he indignantly asks, "How is it that on a subject on which men have thought deeply from the moment they began to think, and where, consequently, whatever is entirely and fundamentally new must be fundamentally false; how is it that in contempt of the experience of past ages, and of all precedents human and divine, we have ventured into a perilous path, which no eye has explored, no foot has trod, and have undertaken, after the lapse of six thousand years, to manufacture a morality of our own, to decide by a cold calculation of interest, by a ledger-book of profit and loss, the preference of truth to falsehood, of piety to blasphemy, and of humanity and justice to treachery and blood?"

"The system which founds morality on utility," he adds in a note, "a utility, let it be always remembered, confined to the purposes of the present world, issued with ill-omen from the school of infidelity. It was first broached, I believe, certainly first brought into general notice, by Mr. Hume in his *Treatise on Morals*, which he himself pronounced incomparably the best he ever wrote. It was incomparably the best for his purpose; nor is it easy to imagine a mind so acute as his did not see the effect it would have in setting morality and religion afloat, and substituting for the stability of principle the looseness of speculation and opinion." After presenting in contrast the Nichomachean morals of Aristotle, and the ethical philosophy of Cicero, "the one composed by the greatest master of reason, the other of eloquence, the world ever saw," and showing the superiority of these systems to that of mere expediency, he continues: "How humiliating the consideration that, with superior advantages, our moral systems should be infinitely surpassed in warmth and grandeur by those of pagan times, and that the most jejune and comfortless that ever entered the mind of man, and the most abhorrent from the spirit of religion, should have even become popular in a Christian country!" (*Works*, Vol. i. pp. 97, 98, 101).

It will be noticed, by a comparison of the above statements, how fully these several writers agree in their estimate of the doctrine which denies the eternal and immutable distinction of right and wrong, and places the ground of that distinction in the laws and customs of society, or in the arbitrary will of God. The main objections urged against that doctrine by subsequent writers will be found substantially embodied in the extracts above given from

Clarke and Edwards ; indeed, they are such as would occur to any sound and independent thinker.

Of those above cited who reject the doctrine that right and wrong are founded in the will of God, some, it is but justice to say, while holding the distinction of right and wrong to be eternal and immutable, and founded in the very nature of things, regard the tendency to greatest good or universal happiness as the particular element in the nature of things on which the obligation to virtue rests ; thus Edwards, Dwight, and Taylor. There is a reason, they would say, why virtue is obligatory, and why the laws of God and man require it—a reason to be found in the very nature of things — and that is the tendency of virtue to promote the highest happiness. Others, however, are content to regard the right as in itself binding, itself ultimate, without seeking to place it on anything beyond. This is the view taken in the preceding article.

## IV.

### THE PROVINCE OF IMAGINATION IN SACRED ORATORY.<sup>1</sup>

THE specific nature and object of this Association seem to prescribe a theme having reference to oratory, and specially to the oratory of the pulpit. I propose to discuss, then, *the True Province of Imagination in Sacred Oratory*, whether, and how far, this faculty may be of use to the preacher.

As the word, however, is used of late with considerable latitude, it may be well first to define what I mean by imagination.

I understand, then, by this term, not the mere power which the mind possesses of forming images of absent material objects, which is, in reality, only memory in one of its forms, but rather the faculty of the ideal—the power of conceiving and representing under sensible forms the purely ideal. It is that which makes the difference between the copyist and the creator. It is that which lies at the foundation of all true art, whose legitimate office it is to carry us beyond the merely phenomenal, and place us in the presence of the real, the truly beautiful. It is that which, in the well-known words of the poet,

“bodies forth  
The form of things unknown.”

<sup>1</sup> An Address delivered before the Rhetorical Society of the Chicago Theological Seminary at its Anniversary in April, 1865. From the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for January, 1867, Vol. xxiv. No. 98.



“To imagine, in this high and true sense of the word,” says Fleming, “is to realize the ideal, to make intelligible truths descend into the forms of sensible nature, to represent the invisible by the visible, the infinite by the finite. In this view of it, imagination may be regarded as the *differentia* of man—the distinctive mark which separates him, *a grege mutorum*. That the inferior animals have memory and what has been called passive imagination, is proved by the fact that they dream, and that in this state the sensuous impressions made on them during their waking hours are reproduced. But they have no trace of that higher faculty and function which transcends the sphere of sense, and which out of elements supplied by things seen and temporal can create new objects, the contemplation of which lifts us to the infinite and the unseen, and gives us thoughts which wander through eternity.”<sup>1</sup>

How far, now, is this faculty of the ideal admissible and of use in the pulpit? Such is the question before us—a question, I need not say, of practical importance to one entering the sacred ministry.

At the first glance, one would say the case is too plain to admit of hesitation. The faculties of the mind are all of use, and were intended by their Creator to be used; nor is there one among them which is not needed by the orator in the exercise of his art. The fact that among the instruments with which nature has furnished the mind we find this faculty is in itself an argument in its favor; and, unless reason can be shown to the contrary, it is fair to presume that it is legitimately at the service of the pulpit orator.

<sup>1</sup> Vocabulary of Philosophy.

There are, however, those who would debar this faculty entirely from the pulpit as unworthy of the sacred office. It is the preacher's business, they tell us, to deal with facts, and not with fancies; with realities, and not with fictions and figments of the brain. They would rule out the ideal, therefore, as wholly at variance with the real.

This, however, is, I need hardly say, entirely a false view of the nature of the ideal. The ideal and the real are not opposites, are not necessarily at variance. The two are, on the contrary, in their highest range, one and the same. The material, the sensible, the tangible, are not the only realities, are not the highest and chiefest truths. There are facts, the grandest and most important, that lie beyond the range of sense. The whole realm of the spiritual, the very realm with which the preacher has to do, is in its very nature invisible, intangible, ideal, but none the less real. The philosophy unfortunately becoming prevalent of late, which comprises only the phenomenal, and ignores a cause; which recognizes only fixed and inexorable laws, and knows nothing of a lawgiver; to which nothing is a reality but the sensible and material universe and its forces, — this surely is not the philosophy of the Christian religion. Christianity recognizes and has to do with something beyond and above the merely phenomenal and material — with the invisible and the spiritual. It deals with facts and realities; but its facts and realities are of this higher sort. To reject the ideal, then, as necessarily at variance with the real, is strangely to ignore the true nature, not of the ideal only, but of Christianity itself, and to shut out the latter from its highest and most legitimate sphere.

The preacher has to do with realities; but so long as those realities pertain to the realm of the ideal and spiritual, and not to the realm of sense, the faculty of the ideal may well be of service to him in conceiving and presenting those realities. He has to do with facts; but it may well be that the clear apprehension and proper statement of those facts will call into requisition the faculty of ideal representation. It requires a certain degree of imagination to be able to state correctly the simplest historic fact, much more those great and peculiar facts which Christianity reveals.

It is objected to the use of the imagination in pulpit oratory, that it tends to an absurd and fanciful style, a redundancy of figures of speech, and the like serious defects. It is not, however, I suspect, to the imaginative faculty, but rather to the abuse, or even it may be to the entire absence and neglect, of that faculty, that these defects are really to be ascribed. A lively imagination, under the control and guidance of a correct taste, would be the surest preventive often of these very faults. It is not imagination, but the want of imagination, that leads to the absurd mingling of metaphor that sometimes occurs in public speaking; as when, for example, a certain legislative orator, not long since, spoke of the wheels of government as blocked by *sharks*, which, like the locusts of Egypt, settled on every green thing. The imagination never perpetrates such blunders. That much abused faculty, had it existed to the extent of a grain of mustard-seed in that man, would forever have kept him from all such absurdity.

The orator is essentially an artist; his the highest of all arts — the art of persuasion; and the highest of

all oratory is that of the pulpit, as dealing with themes the most profound and interests the most momentous. It were strange, surely, if this artist were denied the most potent instrument of his art and of all art; if this orator were debarred the use of that which is in all other cases essential to the highest and most effective oratory. For in oratory, as in all art, it is mainly the ideal element that imparts the peculiar charm, nameless and indescribable, which distinguishes the productions of true genius.

Without discussing further the right of the pulpit orator to avail himself of this faculty, I proceed to mention certain specific advantages to be derived from its proper and legitimate use.

And first it is obvious that *the higher and bolder flights of oratory* are largely due to the faculty of the ideal. When in the full tide and tumult of excited feeling the orator, carried away by the impulse of the moment and the force of the argument, leaps at a bound over the limits of time and place, and summons the absent and the invisible, and even calls up the dead to bear witness to his words, we have an illustration of the true power and province of imagination in oratory. An instance of this occurs in the Oration on the Crown, where Demosthenes suddenly appeals, in confirmation of what he is saying, to the illustrious dead who rushed into danger at Marathon, and those who stood side by side at Platea. Hardly less sublime than this apostrophe of the great Athenian orator is the passage in which the apostle to the Gentiles, having named many persons illustrious for faith, by a bold and striking figure gathers these ancient heroes from the past as spectators of the present—a cloud of

spiritual forms hovering over the race-course where the Christian runs for the prize of his high calling: "Seeing then that ye are encompassed with so great a *cloud of witnesses*." Bolder and more sublime than either is the remarkable passage in which Isaiah describes the descent of the monarch of Babylon to the realms of Sheol. From their shadowy thrones the kings and nations of antiquity rise to receive the coming stranger: "Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming; it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations."

I can hardly forbear to add, from the oratory of the present day, a further illustration of the use and power of the imagination in the bolder flights of eloquence. When over the ruins of Fort Sumter the old historic flag was raised again, the orator,<sup>1</sup> inspired by the sublimity of the occasion, and conscious that he was uttering the sentiments of the nation, after charging upon the ambitious political leaders of the South the whole guilt of this war, thus proceeds to arraign them for retribution: "A day will come when God will reveal justice, and arraign at his bar these mighty miscreants, and then every orphan that their bloody war has made, and every widow that sits sorrowing, and every maimed and wounded sufferer, and every burdened heart in all the wide regions of this land, will rise up and come before the Lord to lay upon these chief culprits of modern history their awful witness; and from a thousand battle-fields shall rise up armies of airy witnesses, who with the memory of their awful

<sup>1</sup> Henry Ward Beecher, in 1865.



sufferings shall confront these miscreants with shrieks of fierce accusation, and every pale and starved prisoner shall raise his skinny hand in judgment. Blood shall call out for vengeance, and tears shall flow for justice, and grief shall silently beckon, the heart-smitten shall wail for justice, good men and angels will cry out, 'How long, O Lord, how long wilt thou not avenge?' And then these guiltiest and most remorseless traitors, these high and cultured men with might and wisdom used for the destruction of their country, these most accursed and detested of all criminals, that have drenched a continent in needless blood and moved the foundations of their times with hideous crimes and cruelty, caught up in black clouds full of voices of vengeance and lurid with punishment, shall be whirled aloft, and plunged downward forever and ever in an endless retribution, while God shall say: Thus shall it be with all who betray their country. And all in heaven and upon earth will say, Amen."

Thus to summon at the bar of divine justice the authors of this great crime, and there to confront them with all those whom their cruel ambition has made desolate, and with the dead from a thousand battle-fields, while it is one of the boldest flights of oratory, is also a striking instance of the power of the ideal.

2. The orator is dependent on the imagination for *the power of clear and vivid description of absent objects*. This power is of great service to the orator. It enables him, by the skilful touch of the artist, to make his hearers, to all intents, spectators of events however remote and scenes however distant, as at the waving of some magician's wand they start into life before us,



and stand out with the distinctness of reality before our eyes. This is in no small degree the secret of effective oratory and the hiding of its power. The tame and common-place speaker tells us that the thing occurred thus and thus—that the murderer entered by a dark passage, ascended the stairs, entered the chamber, dispatched his victim, and made his escape, passing down such a street; all which may be very true, but scarcely more impressive than to be told that the diameter of the earth's orbit is so many thousand miles. The true orator, by a few skilful touches, brings the whole scene before us—the victim, the approach of danger, the entrance, the blow, the escape of the assassin. Under the handling of a Webster we do not so much hear or read, as see these things transpiring before our own eyes. It is the imagination which enables the orator thus to seize upon the details and impart reality to the picture.

A fine illustration of this occurs in the sermon of Horace Bushnell on Unconscious Influence, in which he has occasion to depict the effects which would follow the withdrawal of light from the earth. "Many," he tells us, "will be ready to think that light is a very tame and feeble instrument, because it is noiseless. An earthquake, for example, is to them a much more vigorous and effective agency. Hear how it comes thundering through the solid foundations of nature. It racks a whole continent. The noblest works of man—cities, monuments, and temples—are in a moment levelled to the ground or swallowed down the opening gulfs of fire. Little do they think that the light of every morning—the soft and genial and silent light—is an agent many times more powerful. But

let the light of the morning cease and return no more ; let the hour of morning come and bring with it no dawn ; the outcries of a horror-stricken world fill the air, and make, as it were, the darkness audible ; the beasts go wild and frantic at the loss of the sun ; the vegetable growths turn pale and die, and chill creeps on, and frosty winds begin to howl across the freezing earth ; colder and yet colder is the night ; the vital blood at length of all creatures stops congealed ; down goes the frost toward the earth's centre ; the heart of the sea is frozen ; nay, the earthquakes are themselves frozen in under their fiery caverns. The very globe itself, too, and all the fellow planets that have lost their sun, are become mere balls of ice, swinging silent in the darkness." A mind less imaginative would never have conceived the idea of depicting the effect of continued darkness, or, if it had attempted anything of the kind, would have been content with the general statement, that the earth would become uncomfortable to the inhabitants, and everything would freeze.

3. The imagination is of service to the orator by contributing to *the clear and forcible statement of truth*. It imparts definiteness of conception and sharpness of outline to his own mental views, and what he thus sharply and definitely apprehends he is able the more clearly and forcibly to present to his hearers. Truths and arguments thus presented stand out in bold relief, and with stereoscopic distinctness, on the field of vision, not mere flat surfaces, but with length, breadth, and thickness of their own, each casting a shadow.

This effect is produced sometimes by the suggestion of the most apt word or forcible expression. Much depends often on the choice of a single word. In a

sermon on the Concealment of Sin South speaks of the great and flourishing condition of some of the *topping* sinners of the world, and of the *remorseless rage* of conscience. Alluding to the fact that justice is represented as blind, he tells us that "therefore it finds out the sinner not with its eyes, but with its hands — not by seeing, but by striking."

Sometimes the effect is produced by a bold and startling metaphor, giving vividness and intensity to the expression, as a sudden flash in a dark night brings out the most distant objects, and lights up the whole horizon. Thus the same preacher speaks of the sinner's conscience as "hitting him in the teeth"; of the devil "spreading his wing" over the sinner, so as to keep him quiet in sin and prevent his taking the alarm; of the covetous man as "greedier than the sea, and barrenner than the shore"; of the perjured shop-keeper, "who sits retailing away heaven and salvation for pence and half-pence, and seldom vends any commodity but he sells his soul with it, like brown paper, into the bargain."<sup>1</sup> The terrible earnestness and force of these expressions startle us. The sentences of such a writer are, like Ezekiel's vision, self-moving and full of eyes round about. We pick our way among them cautiously, as past the cages of wild beasts in a menagerie, that glare at us as we go by, and seem ready to spring from behind their iron bars. The effect of a lively imagination in giving intensity and vividness to the conceptions and utterances of the preacher is well illustrated in the description which Dr. Bushnell gives of the human passions, in the discourse on *The Dignity of Human Nature shown from its Ruins*: "Here,

<sup>1</sup> Sermon on Covetousness.

within the soul's gloomy chamber, the loosened passions rage and chafe, impatient of their law; here huddle on the wild and desultory thoughts; here the imagination crowds in shapes of glory and disgust, tokens both, and mockeries of its own creative power, no longer in the keeping of reason; here sits remorse, scowling and biting her chain; here creep out the fears, a meagre and pale multitude; here drives on the will in his chariot of war; here lie trampled the great aspirations, groaning in immortal thirst; here the blasted affections, weeping out their life in silent injury; all that you see without in the wars, revenges, and crazed religions of the world, is faithfully represented in the appalling disorders of your own spirit."

How vividly is a simple truth presented under the following clear and well-sustained metaphor. "They [the revolutionary movements of society] mark revolutions of the wheel of progress. In the dim and distant past the strokes of that wheel are heard only at vast intervals. Like the leap of Hesiod's horses of the god's, while making one bound, awful ages have passed away. So of the car of social progress. The wheel-strokes at first fall on the ear, solemn and slow, over the vast and twilight profound. But quickening with time, they grow more and more rapid as they approach, till at length they become undistinguishable, and sweep by us with the continuous rush of the steam-car, hurrying, storm-like, to its goal."<sup>1</sup>

One hundred years ago, along the aisles and arches of the venerable abbey where are gathered the ashes of England's most illustrious dead, and where from the walls look down the busts and statues of her statesmen,

<sup>1</sup> Address of Dr. Post of St. Louis, on National Regeneration.

her warriors, her poets, a clear, sharp voice rang out, in tones which must have fallen with startling effect upon the courtly audience, the following sentences: "And therefore for a man to run headlong into the bottomless pit, while the eye of a seeing conscience assures him that it is bottomless and open, and all return from it desperate and impossible; while his ruin stares him in the face, and the sword of vengeance points directly at his heart, still to press on to the embraces of his sin, is a problem unresolvable upon any other ground but that sin infatuates before it destroys. For Judas to receive and swallow the sop when his Master gave it him seasoned with those terrible words, 'It had been good for that man if he had never been born,' surely this argued a furious appetite and a strong stomach, that could thus catch at a morsel with the fire and brimstone all flaming about it, and, as it were, digest death itself, and make a meal upon perdition."<sup>1</sup>

It is not, however, solely by the intensity and energy which it imparts to his conceptions that imagination contributes to the effectiveness of the orator. Quite as much is due, perhaps, to the purity of style and elevation of sentiment which it tends to produce. There is no one quality more favorable to clearness and purity of style, to that crystalline transparency that sets a thought in a frame-work of light, and makes it stand forth in its beauty like a star in the clear azure, than the faculty of the ideal. It has been said of Plato that his words must have grown into their places, so spontaneous do they seem, and so fitting. A recent English reviewer pronounces Milton's speech of Belial, in the

<sup>1</sup> Sermon by South, on the Practice of Religion enforced by Reason



debate of the fallen angels in Pandemonium, the greatest classical triumph, the highest achievement of the pure style, in English literature.

Of Shelley the same critic remarks that the rhythm of some modulating air seems to move his words into their places without an effort of the poet, and almost without his knowledge; while in the language of Wordsworth, on the other hand, we detect something of the taint of labor and of duty. As to elevation of sentiment, we all know how much it is in the power of a just and apt illustration to dignify, while it adorns, the subject treated, and thus to elevate the mind of the hearer. A happy instance of this occurs in the oration of Webster on the completion of the Bunker Hill Monument, when, by a simile at once apt and elegant, he likens the character of Washington to the grand and solid shaft that stood before him: "His public principles as firm as the earth on which it stands, his personal motives as pure as the serene heaven in which its summit is lost." When speaking of the motives that led to the peopling of New England, the same orator says of the May Flower: "Like the dove from the ark, she had put forth only to find rest. . . . The stars which guided her were the unobscured constellations of civil and religious liberty. Her deck was the altar of the living God. Fervent prayers, on bended knees, mingled morning and evening with the voices of the ocean and the sighing of the wind in her shrouds." With what beauty and dignity do these simple images invest the theme.

When South tells us that the words of Jeremiah in the Lamentations are like the noise of a breaking heart, and when he compares an ungrateful heart that



is unmoved by acts of kindness to a rock which, beaten continuously by the waves, still throws them back into the bosom of the sea that sent them, but is not at all moved by any of them, we know not whether the force or the beauty of the comparison is the more to be admired.

It may perhaps be thought that, while the imagination contributes somewhat to the vividness and force of the more ornate and rhetorical portions of discourse, the more solid, and especially the argumentative portions, derive their power from a different source. Yet even in close and solid reasoning the faculty of the ideal is not, I suspect, wholly without its use. An illustration, or an apt and striking metaphor, that shall embody and project an abstract truth or a general principle into concrete reality, is often the most effective form of argument, as every orator well knows. How forcibly is the essential incompatibility of liberty with slavery, and the folly of seeking to combine them in one and the same system of social order, set forth by one of our own most gifted minds in the following metaphor: "We have thought to incorporate in our social and civil order, with eternal rights, human and divine, a vast wrong, most audaciously and flagrantly violative of both. We have thought to do this—to bind up the torch and magazine together; and that with the self-consciousness of the nineteenth century burning and kindling upon it. The explosion has filled land and seas with our ruin. And now, in the work of reconstruction, shall we take up the blazing timbers and attempt to rebuild them into the national structure? If so, we but labor in the very fire—we challenge fate. We build conflagration, explosion, ruin,

into our architecture. Slavery, the sighs from her vast prison-house of past ages following her like a tempest, now stands before us, the confessed enemy of our national life, reaching hands for readmittance across the gulf of public ruin and over the graves of half a generation. Shall we clasp those hands again, reeking with the blood of a million of our countrymen? A mighty army of melancholy heroic shadows forbid."<sup>1</sup>

Nothing contributes more to force of reasoning, especially in the detection of fallacies and exposing of absurdities and sophisms than that sharpness of the intellectual powers which we call wit, and which again closely borders on the ideal. An example of this we have in that solid reasoner, John Howe, driest of learned divines, who gives us in his "Living Temple" a specimen of satirical writing hardly equalled for keenness and unrelenting sarcasm by anything in the English language. Scarcely more pitiless is Voltaire or Carlyle, those terrible satirists. I refer to his discussion of the atomic theory of the soul, "which is said to be composed of very well polished, the smoothest and the roundest, atoms; and which are of the neatest fashion, and every way, you must suppose, the best-conditioned the whole country could afford. . . . . And now, because it is not to be thought that all atoms are rational, — for then the stump of a tree or a bundle of straw might serve to make a soul of, for ought we know, as good as the best," the question is raised, by what properties an atom shall be entitled to this privilege of being rational. Having ascertained that it is only those which are extremely minute that can be admitted to this honor, he proceeds to lament the

<sup>1</sup> Dr Post on National Regeneration.

misfortune of those which prove to be too large: "Here, sure, the fate is very hard of those that come nearest the size, but only by a very little too much corpulency happen to be excluded as unworthy to be counted among the rational atoms." The question is then raised, "whether if an atom were perfectly round and so very rational, but by an unexpected misadventure it comes to have some little corner somewhere clapped on, it be hereby quite spoiled of its rationality? And whether, again, one that comes somewhat near that figure, only it hath some little protuberances upon it, might not by a little filing, or the friendly rubs of other atoms, become rational?"

Supposing, now, a sufficient number of these little atoms brought together to constitute a soul, our merciless logician is exercised to know the *modus operandi* of their proceeding — how, being so light and so round, they continue to hold together and keep their places in solemn council; how, being so much alike, the mathematical atoms can be distinguished from the moral; how, since the particles are so constantly changing, it happens that any man should even continue of the same opinion with himself for a quarter of an hour together; and finally, how the mere motion of these atoms constitutes thought. "They can frisk about, and fly to and fro, and interfere among themselves, and hit, and jostle, and tumble over one another, and that will contribute a great deal."<sup>1</sup> O merciless reasoner! Is it not enough to vanquish the enemy and put him to rout, without pursuing him all around the horizon in such a ridiculous plight? And, as if that were not enough, must you deliberately bind the slain

<sup>1</sup> Living Temple, part i. chap. iii.

foe to your chariot, and drag it, as Achilles did the dead body of Hector, nine times around the walls?

4. I have spoken of the imagination as aiding the orator by imparting clearness and definiteness of conception, and thus contributing to the clear and forcible statement of truth. But further than this, it is needed, if I mistake not, in order to *the right apprehension of many of the highest and noblest themes*. Whatever appeals to the imagination can be rightly comprehended only by the imagination, as what addresses the reason and judgment can be appreciated only by those faculties. The Bible has much that is addressed to the plain common sense of man, and it requires common sense to understand these things. It has much that is addressed to the reasoning power, and some degree of the power of reasoning is requisite for the comprehension of that. It has much, also, that is addressed to the imagination, and these things a mind destitute of imagination, or in which that power is but feebly developed, can never rightly apprehend. There are some things in revelation, as there are some things in nature, and some in art, which reveal themselves in their true meaning and power only to the *ideal* faculty. It takes a poet or an artist to catch the true significance and feel the full power of some things. Niagara appeals to the sense of the sublime and the beautiful in the soul. A mind in which that sense is wanting, or but imperfectly possessed, cannot understand the scene. The statistician comes with his facts and figures, the logician with his syllogisms, the mathematician with his diagrams and logarithms, the mere man of science with his chemical analysis and his fossil remains; and what do all these know or comprehend of the wonderful scene?



As little, very likely, as the donkeys that carry them. If their heads are full of their own figures and syllogisms and fossils, if they are *mere* statisticians, mathematicians, logicians, chemists, and not poets as well, there is to them very little meaning or power in the wonderful vision. It reveals nothing. They have seen only a waterfall, have heard only a noise. There are lofty and glowing passages in the sacred scriptures, the full power and majesty of which are never perceived by any mind that is not itself highly endowed with the power of the ideal. There are themes of sacred oratory, which no man can properly touch, whose soul is not itself elevated, and in a sense inspired, by this superior power.

There are some minds that nature has formed as dry as summer dust — unpoetic, pragmatic; to whom a cowslip on the river's brim a yellow cowslip is, and nothing more. Devout minds they may be, and eminently so; learned, even, for learning dwelleth oftentimes in dry and desert places; but hard and stiff and angular and horny, and of cuticle thicker than the rhinoceros; with little perception of the beautiful in nature or art, and lightly esteeming the little they do perceive. Such minds have their sphere. In the stern conflicts of opinion, in the controversies of the time, in the elaboration and defence of dogmas, in the laboratories and dusky mines, where heavy blows are to be struck, they are in place and at home. But in the wide realm of the imagination, the serene firmament of the ideal, they are wholly out of place and utterly lost. To such minds no small part, not of nature merely, but of revelation, must of necessity be essentially a sealed book. They lack that fine perception and quick sense of the

beautiful which would fit them to be true interpreters, whether in the realm of nature or of the spiritual. We comprehend only that to which there is something respondent in our own nature; and the greater the correspondence the fuller the sympathy and appreciation. It takes a Goethe to understand a Goethe; it takes a Caesar to do justice to a Caesar; Napoleon III. is by position and career and character better fitted to write the life of Caesar, than Guizot or Thiers. To view a mountain rightly you must be yourself among the mountains, and not on the plain. One gets the true idea of Mont Blanc, not from the Vale of Chamouni, but on the summit of the Tete Noir or the Col De Baume. To comprehend the full majesty of the Jungfrau you must take your station on the Great Scheideck.

It has been felt as a serious defect in many of our biblical interpreters that they lack the ideal element. Profoundly versed in the minutiae of verbal and grammatical science, they seem profoundly insensible of anything higher, and fail to comprehend the majesty and beauty of the loftiest strains of David and Isaiah and John. They interpret the song of Miriam at the Red Sea, the psalm of Moses, or that grandest of all dramatic poems, the Apocalypse of John, with as little feeling, as little appreciation of the real beauty and majesty of the work, as if they were expounding the genealogical tables commencing with the names Adam, Seth, Enos. I would by no means be understood as depreciating the science of biblical criticism. Precision and science are necessary in the commentator; but so, also, is some degree of soul. Napoleon placed the leading mathematician of France at the head of an



important bureau in his government, but was disappointed in the result. He found him, as he expressed it, always dealing with the infinitely little. It can hardly be denied that the tendency of modern biblical criticism is to minuteness of detail, often to the loss of the spirit and breadth and power of the argument or the passage as a whole. We must have precision and philological acumen; but we must have something more. We must have grammatical science; but let it keep its place. When Isaiah sits down at the grand organ, and its notes come rolling through the centuries, we care not to pause in the midst of some triumphant anthem to discuss the propriety of a dagesh-forte; and when the great artist unrolls the mysterious canvas of the future, and describes the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, there is something of more importance to be considered, just then, than the accent of an iota or the necessity of a paulo-post future.

For this reason we should prefer the comments of a Goethe, a Milton, a Burns on some passages of Scripture to those of a De Wette or a Meyer; Sir Walter Scott might hit the sense, we doubt not, in some cases, where his namesake misses it; Tennyson and Bryant and Whittier might tell us some things that Robinson, Ellicott, and Alford have failed to see. It was the rare charm of that accomplished biblical scholar, the late Bela B. Edwards, that his soul was in sympathy with the beauty and majesty of the inspired word. He sat at the feet of the old prophets and singers of Israel, as the young artist at the feet of Michael Angelo. Nor was this the least excellence of the noble Stuart, that prince of biblical scholars. To peruse with him the pages of inspiration was like wandering with Church

among the Andes, or with Ruskin among the stones of Venice.<sup>1</sup>

What has been said of the biblical interpreter may with perhaps equal truth be affirmed of the theologian. Something of the ideal faculty is needed, something of the quick sense of the fit, the harmonious, the symmetrical, in order to adjust the truth in its right proportions, and grasp in thought the completeness and grandeur of the Christian system. For lack of this there is something defective about many of our systems of theology. They are one-sided, disjointed, inharmonious, or they are narrow and incomplete. They fasten upon some one truth in some one of its many aspects, and make it stand for the whole; as if a fly, alighting on some one of the ten thousand pinnacles of the Milan cathedral, should say: This, then, is the celebrated temple—this marble statue on which I stand; though I do not see that there is anything so very wonderful about it; it looks to me very much like the figure of a man. Poor fly, so it does; but if you *could* only see the *temple itself*!

Of all theologians Calvin is perhaps the least imaginative. Dwelling on the shores of that most beautiful of lakes, beneath the shadows of the Jura and in full view of the snowy summit of Mont Blanc, neither the grandeur nor the beauty of nature seems to have touched any corresponding chord in his bosom. We find in his pages no allusions to external nature, no illustrations borrowed from the magnificent scenes around him. With Luther it is quite otherwise. He has a poet's heart in his bosom, and, with a poet's sensitive nature and quick eye for the beautiful, re-

<sup>1</sup> See note at the end of this Article.

sponds at once to whatever is fitted to awaken aesthetic emotion. The system of the former stands like the rocky cliffs of Sinai in the desert, grand in outline and stable in its eternal foundations, but frowning and sterile. That of the latter, while not less lofty and profound, is clothed with verdure and vocal with songs.

The complete theologian would be one who should unite in himself many and various qualities. He must be many men in one — logician, metaphysician, psychologist, linguist, student of law, student of natural science, student of history, student of men and manners. These he must be, and, not least of all, there must be in him something of that ideal power which inspires the poet and the artist, and which elevates the mind to its highest and purest quality of action. Augustine, with that beautiful simplicity which characterizes his Confessions, makes penitent admission of the fact that in his youthful days he found more delight in the Aeneid of Virgil, than in the multiplication table — a sin, if it be one, in which, I doubt not, many of us have participated. “‘One and one, two’; ‘two and two, four’; this was to me a hateful singsong; ‘the wooden horse lined with armed men’ and ‘the burning of Troy, and Creusa’s shade and sad similitude,’ were the choice spectacle of my vanity.” But had it been otherwise with the boy, we should have missed something that now charms us in the man — something of that mingled strength and grace, those bold and fervid utterances, those life-like delineations which command the listening ear of centuries, and which are due in no small degree to the existence and activity of the ideal faculty in that remarkable mind. He was not the worse, but the better theologian in his maturer

years, for that poetic sensibility which led him, when a boy, to weep over the sad story of the Carthaginian queen.

I have mentioned certain respects in which imagination may be of service to the preacher. If I mistake not, these considerations derive additional force from *the character of the present time*. Our religion, as was said at the outset, deals largely with the invisible and intangible. It looks not chiefly at the things that are seen and temporal; its grand realities lie beyond the horizon of the present; it walks by faith, not by sight. It belongs to the spiritual, and not to the material and the sensible. But the tendency of the times is strongly to the opposite of this; men believe in what they see and handle, and little else; ours is an intensely practical age. We belong to the indicative mode and present tense of things; we are struggling for liberty and just law, fighting for national existence, digging for gold. The problem with us is to live; the actual present fills our thoughts, and the material world is all the world we know or have any evidence of. In theory and in practice, in philosophy and science, and in the actual conduct of life, we are fast drifting to materialism.

The great question to be settled, the great battle to be fought by the Christian church and ministry for the next half-century, is not whether this or that particular dogma of our ancient faith is defensible, this or that particular statement of Moses or some other sacred writer is reliable, but have we a revelation, and have we a God? Is there anything beyond Nature and her eternal, irrevocable laws? It is not the scepticism of Colenso, or even of Renan, that is to give us the most

serious trouble, but the scepticism more insidious and more formidable, because more in harmony with the tendencies of the age — the scepticism of Comte and Spencer and Lewes and Mill in philosophy, and of men among the very chiefest in natural science. The battle is between the natural and the supernatural, the material and the spiritual.

He who in an age so practical and material is to present to men for their acceptance and belief truths so spiritual, a religion of faith and not of sense, the religion of the future and the supernatural, has need to arm himself not only with the weapons of reason and a sound philosophy, but also to call to his aid that power by which he shall be able to seize the invisible and the spiritual, and make them stand forth as realities to the awakened perceptions of his hearers. A bold and fervid imagination is needful for this. Plati- tudes and abstractions will not do. The powers of the world to come must take form and shape; the hand- writing of impending doom must come out upon the wall, visible to the dullest eye.

Here lay in no small degree the secret of Payson's peculiar power as a preacher, the definiteness and reality which his vivid imagination imparted to what- ever truth he would present, and the strong light in which it enabled him to place the realities of the in- visible and spiritual world before his hearers. The most effective pulpit orators of the present day are, almost without exception, men largely gifted with this power.

But why refer to other examples, when the discourses of him who spake as never man spake afford the richest illustrations of our theme? How full of imagination



those discourses; how rich and varied the imagery; his very words are pictures; he speaks to the eye of the hearer; he utters the most profound truths, but, clothed in the forms of sensible representation, they become, like himself, incarnate. He teaches not so much by argument as by metaphor and illustration. His sermons are parables, and a parable is a little poem. If called upon to specify the one distinctive feature of our Saviour's discourses, I should name this — the predominance of the ideal element. When he would inculcate the lesson of reliance on Divine Providence, he reminds us of the lilies, which toil not, neither do they spin, and of the sparrows that fall not without our Heavenly Father's notice. When he would teach us of how little moment are the distinctions of earthly rank and condition, he shows us the rich man in his palace and the beggar lying at the gate; then, presently, that beggar in Abraham's bosom, and that rich man calling in vain for a drop of water to cool his tongue. When he would teach us to be doers of the word, and not hearers only, he builds a house upon the sand, and the rains descend, the winds blow, and the floods beat upon that house, and it falls, and great is the fall of it. In his vivid presentation, the future suffering of the ungodly takes shape and realization under the figure of the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched. To express the lesson of unreserved consecration, he does not say, My disciples must make my service paramount to all other considerations, but "He that cometh after me, and hateth not father and mother and sister and brother, yea, and his own life also, cannot be my disciple." So vivid and intense become even the most abstract and uni-



versal truths when brought under the burning glass of his fervid imagination. It toucheth the mountains, and they smoke. . .

He who in this most pragmatic, unbelieving age would seize the truths of the invisible and spiritual world, and make them stand forth as realities to the apprehension of men, has need in no small degree of this same faculty which characterizes so remarkably the discourses of the Great Teacher, and which imparts to them at once so much of beauty and of power.

What was said of the theologian is even more true of the preacher, who is the theologian in the pulpit. He has need to be many men in one; he has occasion for qualities and powers the most diverse; he must discard no one of the faculties which God and Nature have given him; he needs them all. Least of all, perhaps, can he afford to dispense with that of which I have been speaking. He must draw his illustrations from all surrounding objects, and each passing event must be made tributary to his purpose. From nature, from art, from science, from the living world as it surges around him, from the heavens above, and from the earth beneath, and from the waters under the earth, must he seize and press into his service whatever can illustrate, whatever can enforce or adorn. As the fabled Orpheus, by the sweet touches of his lyre, drew the wild beasts of the forest and even inanimate objects around him at his pleasure, so must the Christian orator, by the power of his imagination, be able to command the presence and service of things animate and inanimate, visible and invisible, in the onward march and progress of his thought. Not rocks and trees and wild beasts alone, but angelic and spiritual

forms must come at his call -- beings that "walk the earth unseen, both when we awake and when we sleep." As the prophet of Israel touched the eyes of his servant, and showed him the mountains round about him filled with angelic warriors and chariots of fire, so must he who speaks for God to this unbelieving world be able to draw aside at times the thin veil that hides the invisible, and show his astonished hearers the dread realities that lie so near to every one of us. As in the contest of Greek and Trojan story, over the embattled hosts upon the plain the gods themselves were fighting for and against the mortal combatants below, so must the dull worshipper of mammon and of sense, as he comes to the house of God, be made to see that the very air above him and around him is full of armed warriors in fierce contest over a prostrate soul -- and that soul *his own!*

## NOTE.

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NOTE. — Page 202.

**IN** this connection how just and how forcible the remarks of Elliott, himself one of the most severely critical of modern biblical commentators, in the preface to the first edition of his Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles.

“Let us never forget that there is such a thing as the analogy of Scripture; that it is one thing generally to unfold the meaning of an individual passage, and another to do so consistently with the general principles and teaching of Scripture. The first may often be done with plausible success by means of acuteness, observation, and happy intuitions; the second, independently of higher aids, is only compatible with some knowledge of dogmatical theology, and some acquaintance with those masterpieces of sacred learning which were the glory of the seventeenth century.

“By the aid of these references I do venture to think that the student may acquire vast stores both of historical and dogmatical theology, and I dwell especially upon this portion of the Commentary, lest the necessarily frigid tone of the critical or grammatical discussions should lead any one to think that I am indifferent to what is infinitely higher and nobler. To expound the life-giving word coldly and bleakly, without supplying some hints of its eternal consolations, without pointing to some of its transcendent perfections, its inviolable truths, and its inscrutable mysteries, thus to wander with closed eyes through the paradise of God, is to forget the expositor’s highest duty, and to leave undone the noblest and most sanctifying work to which human learning could presume to address itself.”

## V.

### THE IDEAL AND THE ACTUAL.<sup>1</sup>

THERE are two worlds in which we live — the ideal and the actual; even as there are two natures pertaining to us — the material and the spiritual. The one is the solid, tangible, actual world of things which exist at this present time in space, and have their dimensions, and can be measured and handled and numbered and described — world of actual existences and actual events. The other is the world of thought, conception, fancy — world of things that exist and events that take place only as our own busy brain creates them — picture-world, dream-world, thought-world, world of the possible, the ideal, as the other is world of the actual.

Passing for the present the question which of these two worlds is the more important, or even the more *real*, it is sufficient here to say that there is in our very nature and constitution provision made for the ideal no less than for the actual; each is a phase and element of our being, legitimately so, and by nature. Along with the capacity for the actual — the worlds of forms and bodies, and movements in space and events in time — there is in every mind a native tendency, more or less manifest, to step over the bounds of the actual into the realm of the ideal, the silent fairy-land of thought and

<sup>1</sup> An Address delivered before the Porter Rhetorical Society at Andover, and at other literary institutions.

fancy. In proportion as the one or the other of these elements predominates in any mind, you have, in the one case, the man of fact, pragmatic, working ever upon the material forms and forces that surround him, measuring, weighing, observing, recording, searching ever after the *what is* or *what was*, content if he may know that, with never a doubt in his mind of the supreme reality and importance of those facts and actualities which fill the measure of his thought and his endeavor; in the other case, the man of lively fancy and manifold imaginings, caring not so much for the *what is* or the *what was* as for the *what might be*, dwelling more or less in a world of his own creation, and investing even the common, dull realities of actual life with the varied hues of his own imagination. To such a mind nothing is absolutely dull or common-place.

“ Life, like a dome of many-colored glass,  
Stains the white radiance of eternity.”

While the tendency to the ideal is much more strongly developed in some minds than in others, and in some periods of life, perhaps, than in others, it is nevertheless a tendency which has its root in our very nature, and of which no mind is wholly destitute. Even the most pragmatic and matter-of-fact man is sometimes betrayed into a fit of reverie, and, like the prophet of old, is caught up ere he is aware in some fire-chariot, and moves aloft in cloud-land, not less to his own astonishment than to that of the by-standers. Then the little round world sails below him, with its mountains and its multitudes, strangely dwindling to a point, while he moves aloft among the grander spheres. Deny it as we may, ignore it as we may, we are all by nature

poets—a race of dreamers, castle-builders, cloud-dwellers. You sit of an evening solitary in your apartment, in what you are pleased to call a vacant mood, gazing into the fire; you see bright embers, glowing coals, jets of flame, and wreaths of curling smoke; presently you see more than that, things take shape and form—faces come out, figures arrange themselves, castles and towers arise, mountains and seas and varied landscapes; and so ere you are aware you have passed over from the actual to the ideal; you are a poet now, dwelling for the moment in a world of your own creation.

● By and by you fall asleep, and what a strange ideal world opens before you at once. The most pragmatic soul becomes visionary then. You who have nothing, as you say, of the poet in you, who care for nothing but facts and solid actualities, what strange fantasies you are all at once executing; the veriest wizard and wonder-worker never did the like. Now you are up among the stars, astride the shoulders of patient Orion, or pulling the Great Bear by the ears. You, who believe in nothing but the actual, are chased over what house-tops and mountain-tops by some fierce hobgoblin, and awake half dead with fright; or it may be in your sleep you have been listening to some fairy strain of sweetest music, like that described by the poet in *Comus*:

“ At last a soft and solemn breathing sound  
Rose like a stream of rich distilled perfumes  
And stole upon the air, that even Silence  
Was took ere she was ware, and wished she might  
Deny her nature, and be never more  
Still, to be so displaced. I was all ear,  
And took in strains that might create a soul  
Under the ribs of death.”



So strange and unreal are the fictions of the brain in sleep; and yet in this same enchanted dream-land dwell even the most pragmatic and practical souls during no small portion of their earthly life.

The tendency to the ideal is more strongly developed, perhaps, in childhood than in later life. The child lives much more than the adult in the world of fancy. The lines that define the two realms are not clearly and definitely marked to the child. The cloud that sails along the summer sky is with him not very clearly distinguished from the fairy shape which his imagination gives it; and whether it be really a white fleecy cloud, or a white-robed angel, with expanded snowy wing, moving silently along the deep blue, he hardly knows. In childhood the mind is full of fancies, and these are often mistaken for realities.

A striking instance of this, and at the same time an illustration of the tendency of childhood to the ideal, occurs in the early life of that gifted but eccentric genius De Quincey, as narrated by himself. He is speaking of the deep grief he felt for the loss of a sister to whom he was much attached, and of the impression made on his mind by a portion of the church service in those days of childish sorrow. "It was a church on the old and natural model of England, having aisles, galleries, organs, all things ancient and venerable, and the proportions majestic. Here, whilst the congregation knelt through the long litany, as often as we came to the passage, so beautiful amongst many that are so, where God is supplicated on behalf of 'the sick persons and young children,' and that he would 'show his pity upon all prisoners and captives,' I wept in secret, and, raising my streaming eyes to the windows of the

galleries, saw, on days when the sun was shining, a spectacle as affecting as ever prophet can have beheld. The sides of the windows were rich with stained glass; through the deep purples and crimsons streamed the golden light; emblazonries of heavenly illumination mingling with the earthly emblazonries of what is grandest in man. There were the apostles that had trampled upon earth, and the glories of earth, out of celestial love to man. There were the martyrs, that had borne witness to the truth through flames, through torments, and through armies of fierce insulting forces. There were the saints, who under intolerable pangs had glorified God by meek submission to his will. And all the time, whilst this tumult of sublime memorials held on as the deep chords from an accompaniment in the bass, I saw, through the wide central field of the window, where the glass was uncolored, white, fleecy clouds sailing over the azure depths of the sky. Were it but a fragment, a hint of such a cloud, immediately, under the flash of my sorrow-haunted eye, it grew and shaped itself into visions of beds with white lawn curtains; and in the beds lay sick children — dying children, that were tossing in anguish, and weeping clamorously for death. God, for some mysterious reason, could not suddenly release them from their pain; but he suffered the beds, as it seemed, to rise slowly through the clouds; slowly the beds ascended into the chambers of the air; slowly also his arms descended from the heavens, that he and his young children, whom in Judea, once and forever, he had blessed, — though they must pass slowly through the dreadful chasm of separation, — might yet meet the sooner. These visions were self-sustained. These visions

needed not that any sound should speak to me, or music mould my feelings. The hint from the litany, the fragment from the clouds — those and the storied windows were sufficient."

But while there is, as I have said, a foundation laid in our nature for the ideal, and while we are all at times, even in spite of ourselves, carried over into the realms of fancy, there is, if I mistake not, in many minds a prejudice against the ideal, as somehow at variance with the actual and at war with common sense. We are an intensely practical people, an intensely earnest and active age, of vast material resources and material wants. The practical, the actual, lays hold of us at every step, and presses us into its service. Roads are to be laid across the continent, and rivers to be bridged, and ships to be built, and broad acres to be sowed and harvested, and machinery of all kinds to be invented and set a going, and the steam-whistle is screaming in our ears, and we run to and fro in our terribly earnest life; and what have we to do with the ideal and the realms of cloud-land? And so the tendency of our nature to something other and better than the material and the actual is repressed, and the yearnings of the soul for the beautiful creations of the ideal are checked, as somehow unworthy of an earnest mind true to itself and its own destiny. It is the conscientious feeling and conviction of many persons, that the actual alone is worthy of our regard, while the ideal is to be banished as far as may be from our thoughts. "Life is real, life is earnest," they tell us — not to be wasted, therefore, in dreams and fancies and cloud-castles. These trifles are the amusements of children, but are not for men.

I am beginning to be a little sceptical as to the validity of this reasoning. As I get older, and am drawn more and more with the rapid years into the whirl and tumult of life, I begin to think that the ideal may after all have its place and its use in the world. I begin to wish that the days of childhood and of cloud-castles would come back again — the days when life was not so terribly earnest as now, when it was pleasure enough to lie all day on the cool grass beneath the trees, and watch the play of light and shade upon the green leaves gently moving and rustling with the breeze, and look up through them into the deep blue sky above, and listen to the low murmur of their thousand voices — days when the minnow in the brook and the red squirrel in the wood were watched with greater interest than the movements of emperors and the fate of kingdoms; when a beauty and a glory rested on the face of earth and sky and all the glorious works of God, and all things had not as yet put on the dull and sombre hue of what men call the realities of life. And when sometimes these golden days do return, and the beauty and the glory of earlier years light up again for a time the sober face of things, I begin to ask whether the ideal is after all to be discarded by the true and earnest man — whether it be really at variance and inconsistent with a due regard to the actual. Doubtless there may be such a thing as the undue exercise of the imagination, the excessive culture of the ideal, to the neglect of the sober realities of life. But that there is any danger of such a result, or any tendency to that extreme in us as a nation, and in this age of iron and steam, is a proposition too absurd to be seriously refuted. On the contrary, may

it not happen that in our eager devotion to the actual we shall too much overlook and undervalue the purely ideal, and so the higher nature that dwells within us become enslaved to the material world that surrounds and shuts us in, and calls for all our energies.

But of what use, it will be said, is the ideal? Yonder on a cliff that pushes out into the Rhine stands a lordly palace, with its towers and terraces; and there, in the peaceful river at the foot of the cliff, lies the same reproduced—the precise image and picture, done in water, of that which is done above in stone. Here meet in close proximity the actual, the ideal. Let us test their claims. The one is useful, you say—can be lived-in and enjoyed as a structure comfortable and convenient for all the purposes of life. The other is merely a pretty picture, of no practical value. True; but, as a picture merely, is it not a thing to be admired and enjoyed? And after all, does it not amount practically to this—that both the castle in stone and the castle in the water contribute to enjoyment; the one by furnishing shelter and commodious dwelling, the other by ministering to the sense of beauty. And so it comes simply to this: Which contributes most to the enjoyment of life, the material, sensible world, represented by our stone castle, or the ideal world, represented by our image in the water? That is at least an open question. In fact, great part of the value of the real castle consists in its contrivances for beauty and ornament, rather than in its contrivances for use. Its marbles and towers and terraces and curious carvings and quaint devices all speak to the sense of beauty in the soul. They appeal to the ideal element of our nature. So far as this is the case, castle and



castle-picture stand on the same ground ; neither is of any special use ; both contribute to enjoyment and the sense of the beautiful ; and the question is merely one of degree : Which is the more to be admired, a castle built of stone, or the same accurately pencilled in the water ?

If now we take the question upon higher grounds, while we find the world of sense — the material, actual world — furnishing the body with food, clothing, shelter, warmth, and the like, furnishing the various conveniences and necessities of animal life, do we not find the ideal — the world of thought — the realm of the spiritual — contributing to the wants of the mind, educating the intellect, correcting the taste, refining the sensibilities, elevating and enlarging the soul, making, in a word, the great difference between man and man, not to say between man and brute ? Art does this in its thousand forms ; the ideal does this — the realm of thought and fancy. And what more or better than this is the use of the actual ?

But it will be said the ideal is untrue and false. I am not quite so sure of that. The image pencilled in the water is just as real as the castle on the cliff ; only the one is a real castle, the other a real picture. The one is just as true and just as false as the other. View it as you will, the picture in the water is as real as the stone-work on the land. The ideal is not of necessity false ; for it professes to be nothing but what it is — picture-work, image-work, fancy-work ; while often the actual building of wood or stone professes to be what it is not. The rainbow is just as real as the rain-drops that form it and the cloud on which it is painted ; and yet it is but an appearance — a vision of beauty



sketched by the glowing pencil of the sun. A thought is as real as a block of granite, though not so heavy. A fancy is as true as a fact, though by no means so difficult to establish. Nay, the fiction often proves true, while the facts, so-called, are found to be false. It is an old remark, and a very just one, of Aristotle, that poetry is truer than history. The actual matter of fact is difficult to be got at, and historic statements are therefore seldom reliable with any positive certainty. Then, again, the actual is true once; the ideal is true everywhere and always. Whether there was in the land of Uz an actual Job, and somewhere else an actual Dives, admits of question; if so, each existed but once. That there have been such men as Job, and such men as Dives, no one can doubt. The world has seen a thousand such. The amount of real truth, then, in poem and parable, on the one hand, as compared with the historic statement on the other, is in the ratio of a thousand to one. But poetry and parables are of the realm of the ideal, and history belongs to the actual world; and the good honest souls that jog on through the world with the conviction that all history is true, and all poetry and fiction untrue — that facts and figures and the actual world are alone to be trusted and believed in, but whatever pertains to the realm of the ideal to be distrusted as unreal and false — are about as near the truth themselves in so thinking as are the facts and figures which they believe in.

As the artist Ruskin has said of the romantic, which is only another phase of the ideal, "This secret and poetical enthusiasm in all your hearts, which as practical men you try to restrain, is indeed one of the

holiest parts of your being. It is the instinctive delight in, and admiration for, sublimity, beauty, and virtue unusually manifested. And so far from being a dangerous guide, it is the truest part of your being. It is even truer than your consciences. A man's conscience may be utterly perverted and led astray; but so long as the feelings of romance endure within us they are unerring — they are as true to what is right and lovely as the needle to the north." <sup>1</sup>

But my object in this address is not so much to vindicate the claims of the ideal to the regard of sensible and earnest men, — entering the lists as adventurous knight in its defence, — but rather to point out the true relation which the realm of the ideal sustains to the realm of the actual in the world as it really is, thus bringing to view the important part which it really plays in the drama of actual life.

1. Consider, then, for a moment the relation of the ideal to our *knowledge of the actual*. Closer than we may at first suppose is this relation. Let us look at it, for example, as regards the *simple perception of external objects*. How do we know the actual, material world around us? By the senses, you reply. I touch the table; I feel the chair; I see the distant object; and thus I come to know by immediate perception the actual material world. But how much exactly is it, after all, that sense gives us in this case? We feel what? A certain degree of extension and hardness. We see what? A certain amount of light, variously figured and colored, coming to the eye from the distant object. Thus by the several senses we learn, one by one, the various qualities of the object — its form and figure, so

<sup>1</sup> Lectures on Architecture and Painting, Lecture ii.

and so ; its bulk, its weight, its color, its roughness or smoothness, and the like. But no one of these perceptions, as given by sense, is a complete knowledge of the object. It is not until we combine all these data of the several senses, and form a notion or conception of an object that unites in itself all these simple and several qualities, that we attain a true idea and real knowledge of the object perceived ; and this is the work, not of one nor of all the senses, — not of the senses at all, but of the intellect. Our true knowledge is our true *idea*, our correct conception, of the thing known. And so it seems that our access to the material, actual world without is only through the realm of the ideal. The material must first pass over into the realm of the ideal before it becomes really known to the mind. This it was, perhaps, that led to the theory formerly entertained, that we know really only our own ideas, and not external objects at all — a mistaken view ; and yet it is true that to know any object is to form a notion or idea of it, and that a correct one. The knowledge is the notion.

If now we look at the manner in which we are led to the *discovery of new and unknown truth*, we shall perceive the close relation of the ideal to our knowledge of the actual. It is not too much to say that in most cases the ideal lies at the foundation of our discovery of the actual. Some lucky guess, some happy conjecture, some fortunate conception, floating at first as a vague idea before the mind, wholly unsubstantiated as yet, has led to a train of reasoning, a series of observations, or a course of experiments, which has resulted in the discovery of some new and important truth. The astronomer, at a loss to account for the perturbations

of Uranus, sets himself to conjecture all possible causes; enters the realm of the ideal, and calls before him from the land of shadows now this, now that, conception of the brain; questions whether it may be so, or so; discovers at last, dimly visible in the darkness, a possible solution; pursues it through the spectral and uncertain regions of hypothesis, until at last it emerges into clear and positive evidence; and that which was at first a mere conjecture takes its place as planet in the solar system, to be pointed at by all telescopes and put down in all sidereal charts. So, too, the chemist and the geologist conduct their investigations. They suppose this or that, make this or that conjecture, proceed with requisite experiments, and find that the thing is really so and so. In natural science, if not in all science, knowledge begins with hypothesis. The discoveries of Newton rest upon the previous discoveries of Kepler, and these, again, originate in a series of hypotheses. There is first, in all discovery of the unknown, an idea of the thing; then more or less of reasoning, experimenting, observing, to see if our idea may be the right one; then conviction and belief; by-and-by demonstration and certainty. And so again, as before, our path to the actual lies through the realm of the ideal. We pass in through the gate of shadows, and reach the *terra firma* of real truth only by questioning the airy fancies that come thronging from cloud-land about our path. We get at the *what is*, only *via* the *what may be*.

2. Consider now the relation of the ideal to the *enjoyment of the actual*—to what we may call the *poetry of life*. It cannot have escaped the dullest observation that much of the charm of life is derived

from this source — the power which every mind possesses, but some in a higher degree than others, of investing the actual with the colors of the ideal. The most common objects seen through this medium become poetic, even as some unsightly rock or shrub, when it catches the sunset and stands all aglow with the splendor that is thrown around it, becomes beautiful with the borrowed light. What light and shade are to the hill-side and valley, such is the ideal to the actual of our common life. The Alps in the gray twilight of the morning and the Alps at sunrise are the same Alps, yet not the same. In the still dawn there rises before you a dimly defined mass, dark and frowning, towering aloft and losing itself in the azure depths. Presently you look again, and the old mountain has clothed itself with light, every line and angle, every jutting cliff and rocky promontory, stands clear and sharply defined against the sky, and the rosy tinge of sunrise, the ruddy blush of the morning, touches with a kiss the snowy summit of the Jungfrau, and the deep shadows lie sleeping in the valleys, and the actual has put on the ideal. It is thus that the ideal is ever lighting up the actual world. How dull would life be, if there were nothing of this — if one saw all things only exactly as they are! Much of the interest which we feel in the objects and scenes which meet our eyes from day to day, is derived from the color with which our own imagination invests them. Peculiarly is this the case with objects which possess a history, and gather about them the associations of a remote antiquity. It happened to me once to visit the Alte Schloss of Baden-Baden. An old dilapidated castle, on a commanding eminence, far away from the



fairly little town, embosomed in a dense forest, the old walls crumbling by age, and deserted by every living thing, it stands there in its solitude and its decay, looking out still from its turrets and battlements on the valley below and on the distant Rhine, even as it has stood looking for centuries. As I stood upon its walls, surveying the wide and regal prospect, suddenly a low sweet strain, as of a lyre, came floating upon the air, and filled the silent ruins with a wild, unearthly melody, now rising, now falling, with the cadences of the wind. It was but a simple thing in itself; but what a train of associations and thick-coming fancies did it call up. The old castle was a ruin no longer. Knights in armor and mailed warriors came riding in at the gates; the bugle was sounding from the warder's tower; there was the clang of arms and neighing and champing of impatient steeds in the castle-yard; ladies fair looked out at the balconies, and prisoners were sighing in the dungeon keep.

What a charm invests the scenery and soil of Italy! It is not merely that the skies are blue and the air full of dreamy beauty, and a mellow radiance invests the distant objects; but it is the thought of the past—the great and solemn history that broods like an ever-present spirit over the land, and of which even external nature seems to be conscious; the associations connected with every river and plain and mountain and lake; in a word, it is the ideal lifting up the actual. Through this gorge defiled the troops of Caesar. From this spot Cicero was wont to look out over the bay of Naples, and yonder is the tomb of Virgil. From the moment he sets foot on classic soil the traveller moves in an ideal land. He sees not the Italy that *is*, but the Italy that *was*.



But why do I wander to other lands, when we have an illustration close at hand. Our national flag—what is it in reality but a few yards of striped cloth ornamented with a few stars? But as it rolls out to the breeze to-day from roof and spire and mast-head, as it floats aloft over our national fortresses, our public buildings, and our ships-of-war, has it not a meaning and a language and a soul? Speaks it not to millions of beating hearts the words of patriotism? Gathers it not within its ample folds the whole history and honor and glory of our land? As amid the smoke of battle the eye of the soldier, faint and wounded, catches a glimpse of the old flag waving above him, how does it inspire him with new ardor to strike yet another blow for the dear old fatherland.

3. The relation of the ideal to the actual may be still further apparent if we consider the connection between the former and the domain of *art*. The realm of art is the realm of the ideal. There is its home, its dwelling, and its birth-place. Whatever form it may assume, whether it comes to us as painting or poetry or music or sculpture or eloquence, whether its object be to please or to persuade, to arouse the passions or allay them, to convince the judgment or please the eye or charm the taste, it is to the ideal element of our nature that it makes its appeal; and it is here alone that we detect the secret of its power over us. There is no greater mistake in aesthetics than to suppose that art is merely descriptive of nature—that its province is merely to give us a fair and true copy of what it sees ready at hand. Art is not mere imitation of the actual. True art, high art, is always *creative*, aims at something better than the actual, is

not satisfied with mere reproduction. Hence the poet, the painter, the sculptor, the composer, are dreamy men and visionary men; they dwell much in the ideal; fancies are realities to them, and cloud-land is their home; visions of things unseen by other eyes float before them; they hear what others hear not. The best likeness extant of Beethoven represents him as a man wrapt in reverie, as if he were listening to some strain of celestial melody that came floating down from the heavens above him. You would think him one of the ancient prophets in the moment of ecstatic vision.

I have said that it is the province of art in its highest forms to give the ideal rather than to reproduce the actual. This may be shown by reference to the works which please us most and are of the highest order of excellence. We never find them exact copies of any original. The original lay in the chambers of the artist's brain. It is something which he saw in cloud-land. Take the best passages of the best poets,—for we cannot so conveniently refer to other departments of art,—and you will find their life and power and charm to be in this, the predominance of the ideal over the actual. When Homer describes the descent of Apollo, in the well-known line,

ὁ δ' ἦν ἐκ νυκτὸς ἰοικώς  
(He came like night),

and when, describing the battle by the sea-side, he speaks of "the dreadful roar of men," we have in either case an instance of the ideal. What has Shakespeare written, of its kind, that is finer than the song of Ariel in "The Tempest"; yet what can be more purely ideal? Indeed, the genius of Shakespeare shows itself in nothing

more than in his fairies, which are purely his own creations. What can be wilder, and stranger, and more purely ideal, than that scene of the witches in "Macbeth"? Or, again, the following, from the "Midsummer Night's Dream":

"My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou rememberest  
Since once I sat upon a promontory,  
And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back  
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath  
That the rude sea grew civil at her song,  
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres  
To hear the sea-maid's music."

Our matter-of-fact man must go far and look long to find the exact original of that. A mermaid sitting on the back of a dolphin, and singing so sweetly as to charm the sea and draw the stars from their spheres, has never been seen, I believe, by any of our scientific expeditions; and if our matter-of-fact man should therefore pronounce the whole passage untrue, I must admit that it is, to say the least, highly colored. When Milton beholds

"The wandering moon  
Riding near her highest noon,  
*Like one that hath been led astray*  
Through the heaven's wide, pathless way;  
And oft, as if her head she bowed,  
*Stooping through a fleecy cloud,*"

and when a modern poet speaks of her as fleeing through the sky,

"Pursued by all the dark and hungry clouds,"

we recognize at once the presence of something more than the actual.

So in the following:

“ Down comes the frantic rain.  
 We hear the wail of the remorseful winds,  
 In their strange penance. And this wretched orb  
 Knows not the taste of rest ; a maniac world,  
 Homeless and sobbing through the deep she goes.”

In all ascriptions of the feelings, the fears, the passions of humanity to inanimate nature, than which nothing is more common in poetry, we have of course the purely ideal, and not at all the actual.

We read, again, in a modern author, that

“ When the heart-sick earth  
 Turns her broad back upon the gaudy sun,  
 And stoops her weary forehead to the night  
 To struggle with her sorrow all alone,  
 The moon, that patient sufferer, pale with pain,  
 Presses her cold lips on her sister's brow  
 Till she is calm.”

We are touched with the exquisite pathos of the sentiment ; but how entirely would it destroy the charm which is thrown over us by such a passage to so much as raise the question whether the statement here made is strictly correct. Astronomers have complained of the *eccentricities* of the moon ; but I am not aware that they have ever detected in her various movements any tendency to osculation.

One of the finest passages descriptive of natural scenery is Shelley's description of the chasm and the overhanging rock ; yet mark how in this the ideal shines through the actual, and pervades it as with a living soul.

“ I remember,  
 Two miles on this side of the fort, the road  
 Crosses a deep ravine ; 'tis rough and narrow,  
 And winds with short turns down the precipice ;

And in its depth there is a mighty rock  
 Which has for unimaginable years  
 Sustained itself, with terror and with toil,  
 Over a gulf, and with the agony  
 With which it clings seems slowly coming down;  
 Even as a wretched soul, hour after hour,  
 Clings to the mass of life, yet clinging, leans,  
 And leaning, makes more dark the dread abyss  
 In which it fears to fall. Beneath this crag,  
 Huge as despair, as if in weariness,  
 The melancholy mountain yawns. Below  
 You hear, but see not, an impetuous torrent  
 Raging among the caverns."

I must not multiply examples; but how purely ideal  
 the exquisite description of the approach of evening, by  
 James B. Read.

"Robed like an abbess  
 The snowy earth lies,  
 While the red sun-down  
 Fades out of the skies;  
 Up walks the evening,  
 Veiled like a nun,  
 Telling her starry beads  
 One by one."

4. But our discussion of the subject would be quite incomplete if we were to overlook the relation of the ideal to self-culture. For what and where were all attempts at self-culture, were it not for the thought, ever before the mind, of something better and nobler than we are — the conception of the higher. This it is that incites us to effort, that stimulates us when weary, and reproves us when indolent, presenting ever to the mind a standard not yet attained, a goal not yet reached. This is the *aliquid immensum infinitumque* of which Cicero speaks. And this is the ideal. As the orator,

in his most adventurous and successful efforts, is conscious of a power and a success, in the art of moving and persuading men, which he has not yet reached ; as the painter, in his most inspired moments, sees a beauty higher and more glorious than any art of his can catch, any skill of his portray ; as the musician, listening with the ear of the soul, hears ever some strain, floating in the air and filling the heavens above him, sweeter than ever human art or human instrument has yet expressed ; so before the true and earnest man in any and all pursuit and attainment there moves ever the *idea* of an excellence not yet reached — of a character more faultless, an aim more pure and lofty, a mind more clear in its vision and stronger in its grasp, a heart truer to the right, a purpose and a strength more prevailing, a peace and a joy more permanent. On this he fixes his eye, and toward this he ever moves. As before the advancing hosts of Constantine moved the image of the cross, with the inspiring motto *Hoc vince*, so before the true man moves the image of his possible self. It is the pledge of success, the signal and harbinger of victory. Were it not for this ideal, had we no conception of anything higher and better than we have yet attained, where were all progress ; where all possibility of improvement ?

It may be too much to say that our success is usually in proportion to the loftiness of our ideal ; but not too much to say that he who has not before his mind a high ideal of what he may and ought to be, and attain, will never rise to eminence in any pursuit or calling. He will rest content with present acquisitions, and present success, and present strength, and think himself already at the summit when he has but begun the



steep ascent. As in the old Platonic philosophy the ideas of all actual and all possible existence lay from eternity in the Divine mind, according to which ideas, as types, the universe of actual things was formed, so may it with truth be said that in our own minds lie the types of our own being and destiny, and that we are ever forming and fashioning our actual selves according to the ideas we have ourselves formed of what we might be if we would, and what we would be if we could.

It is the consciousness of failure thus far to reach this ideal of what we have ourselves marked out as altogether possible and desirable for us that constitutes one of the saddest reflections on the review of past life. So much less attained, so much less accomplished, than we once expected to attain, and are sure we might and ought to have accomplished.

In the watches of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, from the land of shadows and of dreams—the cloud-land of the mind's own fancies—a beautiful vision sometimes passes before you. Sorrowful and silent it stands by your bedside, and you discern the form thereof. It is the image of yourself, yet not yourself—not the being that you are, but the being that you might have been, and once thought you should be—your other, your ideal self. And you never behold that vision but with tears.

And will the ideal never become the actual? Are we doomed to be ever thus disappointed—to move toward a mark which recedes as we advance—to have ever before us the idea and image of an excellence which we are never to attain? This I will not say. And yet it is true that, progress as we may, there will still be something before us yet unattained. Our vision

widens as we advance. There is in every soul a longing for that which is higher and better than anything yet realized. The ideal is ever in advance of the real.

Once, and once only, has it been otherwise; once, and only once, has the loftiest ideal that man can form of moral excellence passed over into the actual and become historic verity. It was ages ago. There came among men One whom they knew not. No guile was in his heart; no deceit was on his lips. Wonderful were his words, his deeds not less wonderful. His whole life was love. His mission was to bless and to save. The sick and sorrowing felt his touch, and the maladies of life were healed, and the ills of life forgotten. The children of affliction, the weary and the heavy-laden found rest as they listened to his reviving words. No character, no life, was ever like that. Men said he was a God. But could that be? Will God in very deed dwell on the earth, and become man? Was the voice that soothed the weeping Magdalen the same that once said, "Let there be light"? Was the hand that touched and blessed the little children the same that set up of old the pillars of the firmament, and hung the curtains of the morning?

And so men knew him not. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." And so, all unknown and unacknowledged, he went forth bearing his cross. On that imperial shoulder rested the burden of no ordinary woe. On that pure and loving heart pressed the weight of a heavier sorrow than man has ever known. To the many crowns that were of right upon that royal brow was added one that human hands had wrought — the crown of thorns. And so came, and so departed from the earth, the loftiest ideal of what man should be that the world has ever seen.

6. If I mistake not there is yet another, perhaps a higher relation of the ideal to the actual. If we were asked to which of the two worlds, that of conception or that of sense, the ideal or the actual, belongs that principle of the spiritual life which we call faith, there can be but one answer. Faith is of the nature and the realm of the ideal. It is to sense and the objects of sense what the ideal is to the actual. It is a principle that has to do with the unseen and the abiding. It is the clear and vivid conception by the mind of that which now we see not, a full conviction of its reality and certainty, so that it is to us as though we saw it, and we can repose with entire confidence upon that conviction, and govern our conduct accordingly. The objects of faith are realities, but they are a class of realities that pertain not to the realm of the actual as it lies about us, but of the ideal; realities that come to us not through the avenues of the material and sensible, but through the lofty gates of the spiritual that open outward upon the great and solemn future. Faith is the ideal carried over into the sphere of the real and eternal, the ideal playing beyond the bounds of time, and the narrow horizon of our little life, into the great firmament of truth that lies beyond and above. As the coruscations of the south flash upward toward the zenith, so faith is the ideal in man shooting upward toward the centre and the eternal throne. And thus imagination and faith are of kindred nature, and of common origin. A sanctified imagination and Christian faith are sister angels that walk hand in hand through the world. Inspiration, addressing the ideal in us, speaks of the beautiful palace of the blest, whose gates are pearls, and whose walls are precious stones, with its river clear as crystal, and its sea of

glass. Inspiration hears and straightway pictures to us this splendid conception. Faith hears and believes, and straightway makes this conception a reality to us, and we thenceforth move on in life looking for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. And sometimes in the hour of sorrow and bereavement, when the heart is desolate and the world is full of solitude, and the eye is dim with tears, comes the angel faith and touches the sorrowing eye, and the gates of the unseen open, and there rises before us the beautiful vision seen by him of Patmos, that sacred temple into which shall enter nothing that defileth; and the redeemed of God are there; and white-robed forms move in glad triumphal procession, conquerors of earth and sin; and among them we behold sainted ones whom we love, and by their side walk little ones whom also we recognize; they too clothed in white, for of such is the kingdom of heaven; and as they move, we hear the distant notes of their song of praise to him that loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood. And having once beheld those things we are no longer desolate, no longer solitary and sad, but take our places again as pilgrims in the ranks of life, believing that there remaineth a rest for the people of God.

And here we must leave a theme already I fear too long discussed. We have glanced at some of the relations of the ideal to the actual. Beginning with the lower we have thus insensibly been led along to the higher; and yet these are but a few of the lower and nearer aspects of a theme which, as we leave it, still seems to stretch away beyond us, and like the vision of the sleeper on the plain, invites us up its golden rounds to higher places and the company of angels.

**PART II.**

**STUDIES IN THEOLOGY.**





# STUDIES IN THEOLOGY.

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## I.

### NATURAL THEOLOGY.<sup>1</sup>

If theology is the science of religion, natural theology is the science of natural religion, and should not be confounded, therefore, with natural religion itself. The question is not whether in fact there is a God, but how do we *know* that there is one, what is the evidence that there is one, and how shall that evidence be best drawn out and presented; not whether there is in man an idea and belief of a Supreme Being, — an idea and belief sufficient to control his conduct, — nor whence he derives that idea, but simply, what is the logical value of it. This palpable distinction between natural religion and natural theology has not, indeed, always been kept in view by theological writers, yet is manifestly of importance.

If the definition now given be a correct one, natural theology, regarded as a science, lies evidently at the foundation, and constitutes the firm basis, of all other theological science. As in religion everything rests upon the *conviction* in the mind that there is a God, so in theology, in like manner, everything rests upon the *certainty*, the clear and decisive *evidence* that there

<sup>1</sup> From the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. vi. No. 4. November, 1849.

is such a being. This evidence it is the appropriate work and province of natural theology to set forth and arrange. Till this be done, nothing can be accomplished in theology. The science of revealed religion does not include this, any more than the superstructure includes the foundation on which it is built. Revelation implies a revealer; it must first be known, then, that *there is* a being to reveal, before it can be known that anything is revealed. Until natural theology has done its work all other theology is impossible.

Nor does revelation come in to aid and assist us in this work. Revelation is out of place, cannot be appealed to as authority, until natural theology has first established this primary truth, that, besides and beyond man, there is a being capable of revealing himself and eternal truth to man.

Manifestly, then, it is of the highest importance that a science which lies thus at the foundation of all other theological truth should be well and thoroughly wrought, and carefully adjusted to its true position. There should be no flaw in the arguments. No part of the work should be slightly done. It should not be left to the enemies of truth to make the first discovery of any existing defect or weakness in the processes of our reasoning. In this matter the friends of truth have more at stake than its enemies. He who points out a defect, or suggests an improvement, in the method of stating or defending that truth, should be regarded, not as a foe, but as a friend to the cause.

Yet, strange as it may seem, no department of theology, perhaps, has been left in so unfinished a state as this; none stands in greater need of what military men term *inspection*. The work has been wrought

upon by diverse minds, in different ages, and in diverse methods. Each in his own way has wrought. Some of the laborers have been truly sons of might, men of lofty and noble powers. But how well the diverse parts of the structure are fitted to each other, what are the strong and what the weak points in the line of defences, how and where it can most readily be assailed — these are, to say the least, open questions.

What we propose in the present essay is to take a general survey of this department of theological science, with a view of ascertaining, if possible, the comparative strength and value of the different arguments generally relied upon to establish the cardinal doctrine of the divine existence.

For this purpose some method of classification becomes necessary. It has been common to arrange the various arguments in natural theology under the general methods *a priori*, and *a posteriori*. It admits of question, however, whether, strictly speaking, there is any such thing as *a priori* reasoning on this subject; any such thing as reasoning from some high and abstract truth downward to the existence of a Supreme Being; whether, in fact, all arguments for that existence must not and do not have some starting-point, some *πρῶτον*, in the world of effect.

Take, for instance, the argument of Clark, usually pronounced one of the finest specimens of this method of reasoning. The starting-point in this instance is that *something exists*; from which it is, by a logical process, inferred that something has always existed — something uncaused, independent, the first cause of all other existence. The whole argument goes to show that this something which now exists is in reality

an effect, and requires a cause. It cannot therefore with propriety be termed *a priori* reasoning, since it does not proceed from cause to effect, but, on the contrary, from effect to cause.

The celebrated argument of Descartes, derived from the idea of God in the human mind, is another instance of what has been usually called the *a priori* method. The substance of the argument is that there could not be this idea of a Supreme Being in the human mind, unless there were a corresponding being, the type and originator of the idea ; in other words, this idea of God which man has is an effect, which requires God as its cause. Is this reasoning from cause to effect, or the reverse ?

Presuming, then, that there is, strictly speaking, only one general method of procedure in conducting the argument for the divine existence, viz. the *a posteriori*, it becomes evident that what we have to do is precisely this: to bring forward, from whatever source, something which can be shown to be an effect, and then to show, moreover, that for the existence of this effect there is and must be not simply a cause, but such a cause as corresponds to our idea of God. The effect must be such as to require for its production all that which we include under the term God. For it is evident that, in reasoning from effect to cause, we can infer no more in the cause than is sufficient to account for the effect. This principle has been strangely overlooked, however, by many writers. They have set out with a definite idea in their own minds of what God is, and having demonstrated, as they suppose, the existence of an effect, and so of a cause, they conclude that they have also demonstrated the existence of the being whom they call God, without pausing to inquire whether the effect

in question is of such a nature as to require for its production just that sort of cause which they have in mind, and which they thus designate. The truth is, we are dependent on the effect for all our positive knowledge of the cause; not simply *that* it is, but *what* it is — not simply that there is a God, but what sort of a being God is. The cause may be more than commensurate with the effect — adequate to the production of effects vastly beyond this which we observe; but we do not know that it is so, have no evidence of that, and therefore no certainty of it. What we have to do, then, in natural theology is, first to find something which can be clearly shown to be an effect, and then to show, furthermore, that it is *such* an effect as requires for its production, not *a* cause, merely, but *the* cause whose existence we wish to establish and which we call God.

The arguments on which different theological writers have placed reliance are manifold and diverse; yet they admit of being reduced to several classes, or leading divisions, according to the sources from which they are derived.

There is, first, the argument from the *simple existence* of matter; the ground-work and simple premise of which is this proposition, "something is."

There is next the argument from the *properties* and *relations* of matter — not merely something is, but something is so and so. The argument from design, commonly so called, falls under this division.

Both the methods now indicated relate to the external world, things without. They are the arguments on which English and American theologians have hitherto placed their chief reliance, and with which they



have principally concerned themselves. But arguments which others have deemed at least of equal strength and importance have been drawn from the world within. Of this sort is the method of reasoning from *the idea of God* which exists in man; in other words, from the nature and operation of the human mind.

Then, deeper and beyond this, in the inner world there is the *moral nature and constitution* of man which also furnishes an argument for the divine existence. These four comprise, it is believed, the various arguments which have been generally relied on to prove the existence of the Supreme Being.

I. The argument from the *existence of matter* claims our first attention. It may be thus expressed. Something exists, therefore something must always have existed; either the things which now are, or else some other and superior being, capable of producing them. But the things which now are, the present system and universe of things, lying about us, subject to our observation, of which we form a part, *this* cannot have been in existence from eternity; is not independent, self-existent, and uncaused. Therefore some other being is so, and is the first cause and author of these things.

This has been regarded by many as one of the strongest arguments which it is possible to frame in proof of the existence of a first cause. Reduced to the syllogistic form, it would read thus:<sup>1</sup>

*First Syllogism.*

1. Whatever exists must either have eternally existed or have begun to exist.
2. But matter has not existed eternally.
3. Therefore matter began to exist.

<sup>1</sup> See note (A) at the end of this Article.



*Second Syllogism.*

1. But whatever begins to exist has some cause of beginning.
2. Matter began to exist.
3. Therefore matter has some cause of its existence, in other words, a producer or creator.

It is evident, now, at a glance on what portion of the argument the burden of proof mainly falls. In either syllogism, the major premise is obviously true—self-evident; it is the minor alone that requires proof. To show that the present system of things is not eternal, that it had a beginning, *hic opus, hoc labor est*. Unless this can be clearly and certainly established, the whole argument falls. You have not shown an effect, and cannot therefore demand a cause. Now this is precisely the point which it is most difficult to establish, and which, nevertheless, seems to have been comparatively overlooked, and hastily passed over, by many writers not sufficiently aware of its importance and difficulty. It is manifestly not so much the *existence*, as the *begun* existence, of matter, that concerns us in the present argument.

And how is this to be proved? For in an argument of this sort we are not to take a mere impression, a conviction of the mind, however firm, as a sufficient basis of reasoning, but to demand clear and conclusive evidence. What, then, is the evidence that the present system of things, or that matter in general, began to exist, and is not from eternity?

Various have been the methods by which different writers have attempted to establish this. Prominent among them are these two: 1. The present system of

things cannot be eternal, because it is composed of successive and finite parts. Generation succeeds generation, plant succeeds plant, man follows man, and so on in constant series and progression. Each part being finite, the whole cannot be infinite. 2. It cannot be eternal, because it admits of change, which is inconsistent with absolute and necessary existence.

The first of these arguments proceeds on the supposition that an infinite whole cannot be composed of a series of parts each of which is finite; in other words, that an infinite series of finite parts is impossible. This has been called a self-evident proposition. It may be fairly questioned, however, whether the evidence of its truth lies so fully obvious as to merit that high claim. Can we not conceive of extension or of duration infinitely protracted through successive periods, each of which is finite, yet, because they are infinite in series, making an infinite whole. If the successive periods or parts, though finite, are without number, so that you cannot fix your thoughts upon any one of them, and say this is the first, or that is the last, is not the *series* in that case infinite? Indeed, what other idea can any man form of the existence of God than this, of a being existing from eternity in successive periods of conscious duration. "*An eternal now*," however bold and sublime as a figure of poetic diction, yet, strictly interpreted, is an expression to which it is utterly impossible for the human mind, constituted as it is, to attach any clear and intelligible idea, for the simple reason that if it means anything, it means that which to us can never be true, but only a contradiction in terms. We might safely challenge any man to form in his own mind a distinct idea of the existence

of a conscious intelligent being, from which idea and from whose existence all succession of thought, feeling, and event shall be entirely excluded.

Does the finiteness of the parts destroy the infinity of the whole? Let us apply this to the divine existence. If there be a God, the first cause and producer of all things, he must have existed before he created. Creation is an event, has a date, a beginning, previous to which the Deity existed alone. We may in our thoughts, then, divide the duration of the Deity into these two parts, in the first of which he dwells alone; in the second, surrounded with created existence. The two make up the entire duration of the Deity; yet both are finite; for the first ends, and the other begins, at the moment of creation. We may, and do, then, without inconsistency or contradiction, conceive of finite parts, yet an infinite whole. It may be said that the duration of the Deity is in reality unbroken and continuous. This is admitted. But the same is also true of all existence so long as it continues. Succession of parts does not interrupt the series. The line may be in reality unbroken, yet in its extension may be carried through a succession of inches without number. A single human life is, from the moment of its beginning to the instant of its termination, a continuous existence, an unbroken thread; yet it is no inconsistency to speak of it as composed of successive parts. Protract that existence, that continuous thread, infinitely in either direction, and you have an infinite series of finite parts.

Is eternal succession impossible? Let us apply this also to the divine existence. It will be generally admitted that in the divine mind there is succession of

thought and feeling. As has been already said, we can form no intelligible idea of a conscious rational existence, which is entirely destitute of this element. We do not, in fact, conceive of God as cherishing toward the sinner repenting to-day, the same emotions with which he regarded the same sinner impenitent and obdurate yesterday. Nor do we conceive of him as putting forth, at one and the same instant, all volitions and all acts — as constantly creating this world, or constantly redeeming it, or as creating and redeeming it at one and the same moment. Succession of events enters into all our conceptions of divine agency, as does succession of thought and feeling into all our ideas of the divine existence. Unless, then, the Deity has existed, at some time, absolutely without thoughts, emotion, or volition, there has actually been an infinite succession of these in the divine mind.

Of the existence of saints and angels, and in like manner of our own future existence, we can form no other idea than this of constant succession through endless duration. The joy, and the song, and the intellectual employment, of an angel before the throne to-day, is not the joy, and the song, and the range of thought, of that same angel as he stood before that throne yesterday and worshipped. And if we are ourselves to exist hereafter, and that endlessly, it will be an existence protracted through successive periods of duration, marked by successive events, successive thoughts and emotions, following each other in endless series and progression. In these cases, however, the succession though endless is not strictly infinite, since it is admitted to have had a beginning. Not so however as regards the Deity. In any case we have only

to make the supposition of eternal existence, and infinite succession becomes not only possible, but seems to follow as a sure consequence. The law of succession, then, cannot be relied on to prove a begun existence.

It is not necessary, however, to demonstrate that there is any such thing, in fact, as infinite or eternal succession; but only that such a thing can without absurdity or contradiction be conceived to exist; that it is not impossible. In either case the objection is valid and the argument is overthrown; for it is claimed by those who advance this argument to be a plain and self-evident truth, that such a thing as infinite succession is impossible.

A new element, however, is introduced into the discussion, when we conceive of the series as composed not merely of successive finite parts, but of parts that are successively dependent each on the other. Plants, animals, men, exist not merely in succession, but each generation depends for its existence on that which preceded. Inasmuch as each part is dependent, can the whole be independent? Can there be an infinite series every part of which had a beginning, but the series itself no beginning; a chain, each link of which depends on another, but the whole on nothing.<sup>1</sup>

That the argument is not materially modified by the introduction of this new element, will appear on a little reflection. In any argument or illustration of this sort, as for instance that of the chain, ideas derived from things finite are carried forward and applied to things infinite, and it is more than possible that some fallacy may lurk under such a method of reasoning. Because there cannot be a chain of numberless iron links suspended in the air without some point of support out of

<sup>1</sup> See note (B.) at the end of this Article.



itself, it does not follow that there cannot be, or that there has not been, an infinite series of generations of living men, plants, or animals in the world, each starting from the preceding, yet the whole series independent of any external producing cause. If the series be infinite, it is for that very reason, and by the very supposition, independent also. There is a virtual *petitio principii* involved in this reasoning. It is confidently asked on what the whole chain hangs, thus presuming a first link; whereas, if the chain be infinite, according to the supposition, it has no first link. What produced the first man, plant, animal, of a series which is infinite and therefore has no first? Where did that begin which by the very supposition has no beginning?

And where does he who so confidently propounds this query, as if it were the end of all controversy, propose to suspend his chain of existence? On a great first link of course, and that link infinite and endless, itself unsupported, and hanging upon nothing. Has he ever seen *such* a chain? Is it not evident that this method of reasoning by illustrations drawn from sensible objects, is, whatever its logical value and force, an instrument capable of turning in either direction, and quite as likely to operate against as for him who uses it.

We come directly back, then, after all, to the simple question already discussed, can there be any such thing as an infinite succession of series? Whatever may be the true answer to this problem, the considerations now suggested are, it would seem, sufficient to show that the alleged impossibility of such a thing as infinite or eternal succession is, to say the least, not a self-evident proposition. In an argument of this sort, derived from



the abstract laws of being or nature of things, an argument so positive withal in its assertions, and so lofty in its claims, the mind demands, and has a right to demand, clear and positive evidence of the things asserted. When the atheist affirms that the present system and order of things is actually an eternal series, without beginning or cause, we demand proof; when the theist affirms that an infinite series is an impossibility, we demand of him likewise the irresistible evidence of what he asserts. It may be fairly questioned whether either theist or atheist can make good his assertion; whether both have not undertaken to prove what cannot be proved. Certainly the mere possibility of an eternal series, even if it were granted, is no evidence that the present system is in fact such a series. On the other hand the argument under consideration fails to furnish clear and sufficient proof that the present order of things is a begun arrangement, an effect.

It has been shrewdly objected to the idea of infinite succession, that in this way we should obtain infinite quantities that are unequal to each other, one infinite greater than another infinite; that if the generations are infinite, the number of individuals must be vastly greater than that of generations, and the number of eyes, limbs, etc., so many times greater than that of individuals, and so we have one infinite ten times as large as another infinite, and that again just half as large as another, which it is affirmed is sheer absurdity. So reasons Bentley, and others after him have attained to the same sharpness. The dialectic subtilty of this objection is more worthy of admiration than its logical force. Are all infinities equal, of necessity? Where is the evidence of that? Clark, the very Phi-

listine of dialectic warfare confesses the futility of this reasoning. "To ask whether the parts of unequal quantities be equal in number or not, when they have no number at all, being the same thing as to ask whether two lines drawn from differently distant points, and each of them continued infinitely, be equal in length or not, that is whether they *end* together, when neither of them have *any end* at all!"<sup>1</sup>

The other argument by which metaphysical writers have endeavored to prove that the present system of things is not eternal, viz. that it admits of change, next demands attention. It is contended that if the world has existed from eternity and is uncaused, the ground of its being is in itself alone, in other words it is a *necessary* existence, a thing which it is an absurdity and a contradiction to suppose not to exist. But all change or modification is inconsistent with the idea of necessary existence. If the world is a necessary existence, then it can never have been, or be supposed to have been, *other than it now is*, in any respect. It would be a contradiction and absurdity to suppose it either larger or smaller than it actually is; either swifter or slower in its movements, having more or fewer mountains, rivers, seas, plants, animals, than it now has. Everything is fixed by the law of absolute unalterable necessity. But such is not the fact with respect to the present system. It admits of and is constantly undergoing change, and cannot therefore be eternal. Such is substantially the reasoning of Clark in his celebrated *Demonstration*.

With all deference to the great minds that have elaborated, and the great names that have endorsed, this

<sup>1</sup> *Demonstration*, p. 85.

argument, it may nevertheless be called in question ; the more so that it has ever professed itself fearless of scrutiny, and boldly challenged investigation.

Where then, it may be asked, is the evidence that all change is inconsistent with self-existence ? how do we know that ? Let the same method of reasoning be applied to the divine existence. The Deity, it will be admitted, exists by a necessity of his own nature ; owes his existence to nothing out of himself. It is impossible, then, according to this argument, to conceive of him either as not existing or as being other than he is. But how is this ? Since I can conceive the world not to exist, can I not also, in that case, conceive the world-maker not to be ; the work being gone, what forbids my supposing there is no workman ? Or I can conceive that it is self-evident, and then, being no longer an effect, it does not demand a cause. Or I can conceive it to be a different sort of world from what it is, in which case it may have required a different kind of Deity to produce it. Had it been a malevolent effect, I should have inferred a malevolent cause. In a word, there is no inconsistency, or absurdity, in modifying our conceptions of the maker, in such a manner as to correspond to any changes we may make in our conceptions of the things made. If it be not absurd or impossible to conceive of the world as not existing, or as existing otherwise than now, then it is not absurd or impossible to conceive of the Deity as not existing, or as being other than he now is. But it is a contradiction in terms, says Clark, to suppose a self-existent, that is, a necessarily existent, being not to exist, or to be other than it is. Therefore, he says, this world is not self-existent. Therefore, he might add also, the Deity is not self-existent.

But in those conceptions which the mind ordinarily forms, and is taught to, form of the Deity, is there not involved something of this forbidden element, of transition from one state or circumstance of being to another? do we not conceive of him now as working, now as resting from his works, and that without any implied change in his nature or attributes? Now who will say that in this transition of the Supreme Being from the state of absolute rest and alone existence, to that greatest of all conceivable works, creation — the calling into being other existences, and innumerable worlds, and systems — there is not involved a change at least as great, as occurs on the earth, in the gradual passing away of one generation, and the succession of another, the falling of a tree in the forest, and the springing up of another in its place, or the gradual changes constantly going on in the relative position of mountain and valley, of land and sea? For in these transitions which we observe, this constant succession of things in the world, is it not a change of state, and circumstances, rather than of nature or essential qualities that we behold? How do we know that all this does not take place in nature according to some fixed, eternal law, founded in the very nature of things, as immutable in its character, as unvarying in its operations, existing by a necessity as absolute as the Deity itself — the universal, eternal, immutable law of transition and succession? What forbids such a supposition, and what is there in it inconsistent with the idea of self-existence? Where is the evidence, that these and the like transitions have not been going on eternally?

But however that may be, if we can and do conceive of the Supreme Being as working, or as resting from his

works, as existing for a longer or a shorter time before beginning to create, as calling into existence more or fewer planets, systems, orders of being, as having never created, — if in any or all these respects we can, without absurdity, suppose the Deity to have been or to have done far otherwise than he has actually been or done, if it be, in fact, no more a contradiction to reason and to the actual state of things to make such a supposition, than it is to suppose the world different from what it now is, then how does it appear that all change, and even the very conception and possibility of change, is inconsistent with necessary and eternal existence? And if this be not inconsistent with the necessary existence of the Deity, why should it be with that of the universe, or of being in general?

But to suppose a self-existent being not to exist, or to exist otherwise than it is, involves as great an absurdity, says Clark, as to suppose two and two not to be equal to four. But suppose one were to deny this. Suppose some one, less acute than the great philosopher, were audacious enough to say: "To my mind this does not so appear, nor can I possibly make it appear thus," what shall be done with this man? How shall he be made to perceive the alleged absurdity? Is not his denial of any such absurdity, as valid in argument, as our assertion of it? To say the least, is it not somewhat singular that if this be, as its advocates affirm, a self-evident truth, so many, and by no means illiterate or ill-informed, minds should have confessed themselves unable to perceive its conclusiveness?

The argument under consideration, however subtle and ingenious, has failed to commend itself generally to reflecting minds, much more to the popular appre-



hension. Dr. Reid says of it: "These are the speculations of men of superior genius; but whether they be solid as they are sublime, or whether they be the wanderings of imagination into a region beyond the limits of the human understanding, I am unable to determine." Dr. Brown speaks with more confidence: "I conceive the abstract arguments which have been adduced to show that it is *impossible* for *matter* to have existed from eternity — by reasoning on what has been termed *necessary existence*, and the incompatibility of this *necessary existence* with the qualities of matter—to be relics of the mere *verbal logic* of the schools, as little capable of producing conviction, as any of the wildest and most absurd of the technical scholastic reasonings on the properties, or supposed properties, of entity and non-entity." Dr. Chalmers also professes himself entirely unsatisfied with this argument, and unimpressed by it: "Because I can imagine Jupiter to be a sphere instead of a spheroid, and no logical absurdity stands in the way of such imagination, therefore Jupiter must have been created. Because he has only four satellites, whilst I can figure him to have ten — and there is not the same arithmetical falsity in this supposition as in that three and one make up ten, — therefore all the satellites must have had a beginning. . . . . We must acknowledge ourselves to be unimpressed by such reasoning. For aught I know, or can be made by the light of nature to believe, matter may, in spite of those dispositions which he calls arbitrary, have the necessity within itself of its own existence, and yet be neither a logical nor a mathematical necessity. It may be a physical necessity, the ground of which I understand not, because placed transcendently above my percep-



tions and my powers, or lying immeasurably beyond the range of my contracted and ephemeral observation."

The metaphysical argument against the eternity of the present system has been somewhat differently stated by a late ingenious writer. The world might have had a beginning; there is nothing to forbid such a supposition. If it might have had a beginning, then it might have had a cause; whatever admits of the one, admits of the other. But if it might have had a cause, then it must have had one, for whatever is capable of having a cause of its existence is incapable of existing without a cause. We have here to use an artistic term, a *variation* of the original theme, sprightly and pleasing, but embodying the same essential idea. It devolves on the reasoner in this case to show, inasmuch as he throws the whole weight of the argument on that one word, that the world *might* have had a beginning; that it is possible for anything, for such a thing, for this particular thing, to come into existence out of nothing; and also to show that whatever can be caused cannot be uncaused; neither of which propositions can easily or clearly be made out by any abstract process of reasoning. Suppose, in the present instance, an obstinate objector were to insist upon reversing this argument, as an engineer reverses his machine, and so obtains movement and speed in a contrary direction. Suppose he were to say: It is possible that the world should have had no beginning; it might have been eternal. If it might have had no beginning then it might have had no cause. But if it might have had no cause, then it must have had none, for whatever admits of being uncaused does not admit of being caused.

It will be observed that in this investigation we have

not been careful to distinguish between the existence of matter in the abstract, and its existence in the present state and system of things, as we find it in our world. The argument, in fact, includes both; nor is the distinction essential to it, since if the *non-eternity* either of matter abstractly, or of our world as we find it, were once clearly established, we obtain in either case the demonstration of a first cause.

Whether this point can be established by any abstract process of reasoning is, to say the least, altogether questionable. As brought to prove the present system an effect, and so to establish the existence of a first cause, the metaphysical argument must on the whole, it would seem, be pronounced unsatisfactory and unsound. When once this point is established the method in question may, however, be of service in demonstrating the self-existence, independence, and eternity of that first cause, which can perhaps in no other way be so clearly shown.

How, then, it will be asked, since not in this way, is that most important point, absolutely essential indeed to the argument, and to the whole science of natural theology, to be made certain? That the present system, this world of ours, had a beginning, may, we believe, be clearly shown, if not metaphysically, yet in some other way. The physical sciences have it for their appropriate sphere and province to do this; and they can do it to the satisfaction it would seem of any reasonable mind. They can and do show that the present things have not always been; that our earth has passed through a series of changes always advancing. In the deep foundations of the globe itself they read the sure history of these changes, written as with an iron pen and lead in the

rock forever. They carry us, with unerring step, back to a period in that history when, instead of the present highly organized forms of matter, and of life, there is no longer the least perceptible trace of any organization whatever. Back of the ever-rushing stream of time, and beneath its mighty cataract, they conduct us along, till we reach the spot where all forms of organized being finally disappear, and we stand on "*termination rock*;" beyond, all is darkness; we can go no further, but the conclusion irresistibly forces itself upon the mind, uttered as with the sound of many waters, that this unorganized matter, too, had its beginning. But however that may be, one thing is now certain, that *life*, in all its varieties of structure and development—life in the plant, the animal, the human species, had a beginning. We reach, we examine, a point in the earth's history when, as yet, there were none of these things. But if these things began, there must have been a beginner; one capable of producing such things. The existence of a first cause is thus reached.<sup>1</sup>

In all this, however, we are reasoning not from metaphysics, but from physics. So doing we build not upon airy abstractions, but upon the firm and solid earth.

II. We come now to the second method or argument in natural theology, an argument not from the existence of matter, but from its manifest properties and relations. The starting-point, the *πov στω*, is entirely changed; the scene is laid, not in the distant places of the universe, but near at home, amid the daily walks and under the common observation of men; the argument rests, not on the abstract truth that matter, or even our world, exists, but that it is *such a sort* of world as we find it to be.

<sup>1</sup> See note (C.) at the end of this Article.

The strongly practical tendencies of the English mind have made this a favorite method of reasoning with theological writers of that country, especially for the last century; previously to which, the metaphysical reasoning of Clark, and others of that school, held, for a time, predominant influence. The argument is, that in the world, as it lies before us, there are such evident indications of contrivance, such adaptation of means to ends, such fitness of one thing to another, as can leave no reasonable mind in doubt that an intelligent, designing mind has been concerned in the arrangement; in other words, that there must have been a contriver.

What, now, is the real strength and true value of this argument? Has it sound logic, and a sound philosophy as its basis and support? In proposing and conducting such inquiries, let us not be understood as disparaging, much less abandoning, this method of reasoning, but rather as diligently carrying on a sort of coast-survey and soundings, with a view to ascertain the true depth of the channel and its proper direction. The more important the channel, the more important that such survey and soundings should be accurately and thoroughly made.

It must be borne in mind that whatever method we pursue in natural theology, the things to be done, as stated at the outset, are these two: First, to show conclusively that something is an *effect*; then, that it is *such* an effect as to require for its producing cause whatever we include under the name and idea of God. Does, then, the argument from design, as now stated, really accomplish these two things?

In order to settle this point, we must first determine what degree and kind of evidence is necessary in order

to prove anything to be an effect, How are we to know what is effect, and what is not? The real question is not what proves a *designer*, but what proves *design*. Does simple *fitness of means to an end* prove it? This is assumed, it will be perceived, in the argument now under consideration. It is the running principle that pervades, and holds together, the entire body of reasoning in Paley's justly admired treatise — the warp that receives the entire filling, with all its beautiful devices. The design of the work and object of the writer is evidently this: to point out in nature a considerable number of instances, as striking as possible, of this manifest fitness of means to a given end; and thence to draw the conclusion, from the facts observed, that this fitness *must have been designed*, must be an effect, and therefore requires an efficient cause or producer. It is assumed that simple fitness of means to an end is a sufficient basis on which to construct the argument, is in itself demonstration that the system of things which exhibits such arrangement and relation of parts must be an effect. The whole argument from design, as usually brought forward by its advocates, rests upon this essential premise, which, instead of assuming, it had been well perhaps to have examined somewhat thoroughly before proceeding to build so important a structure upon it. This seems nowhere to have been done. Everywhere it is taken for granted that fitness of things to given ends is contrivance, and so proves a contriver. But is this invariably and necessarily so? Is there no element overlooked in this process? Does simple fitness to an end, however striking and admirable that fitness may be, in itself prove design? Is it of no consequence that



we should know whether this relation and fitness of things, which we call contrivance, is a *begun* arrangement, or not? If, in proposing these inquiries, we seem to be striking at the very foundation of the argument from design, as usually advanced, it is only that we may replace that argument upon a firmer basis.

The question is one not to be determined at a glance. The simple fact that the human mind, whether rightly or wrongly, logically or illogically, does nevertheless almost universally reason in this manner, that where there is manifest fitness of things to given ends, there is design, there is an effect, somebody has been at work there, this of itself goes far toward establishing the correctness of the principle in question. But how is it, and why is it, that we invariably reason in this manner? This is a matter deserving the closest attention.

Reid, Stewart, and the philosophers of that school refer the matter to a *primary law* of the human mind. We are so constituted that when we perceive this relation of things, this fitting of one thing to another so as to bring about a certain end, we are convinced that there must have been design there — contrivance — a contriver; and in coming to this conclusion we simply carry out the law of our nature.

Now it is easy to account for any phenomenon which we imperfectly understand in this way — to refer it to a primary law of the mind, and say we are so constituted, and that is the end of the matter. Nor is it easy for any one to show that such is not the true solution of the problem. It deserves to be considered, however, whether, in the present instance, such a principle will not carry us too far. If it be a primary law of the human mind that leads us to reason thus, then



such reasoning is beyond question correct, and its conclusions valid. Wherever we see this fitness and relation of things, there it becomes certain that design has been employed. We have the best possible evidence of it, the testimony of this primary law of our own being, which, unless we are so constituted as to be always deceived, must speak the truth. Whatever presents to our mind, then, any fitness to a given end is beyond doubt an effect, a contrivance; the greater and more manifest the fitness, the greater and more sublime the end to be accomplished, so much the greater the evidence and the certainty of this. *Above all other beings and things, then, we must conclude the Deity to be an effect*; for he, of all beings and things, presents to our conceptions the greatest and most manifest fitness to the greatest and sublimest ends. Nor is there any escape from this sad conclusion, but to retrace our steps, and proceed anew more cautiously.

Perceiving the difficulties which are likely to attend this solution of the matter, others refer the whole thing to *human experience*. Of this number are Paley and Chalmers. It is not, according to them, because of any primitive law of the mind that we infer design where we see fitness to given ends, but simply because our own experience teaches us thus to reason. We have ourselves, in repeated instances, observed this fitness of things to be the result of special contrivance, on our part or on the part of others; have never, perhaps, in a single instance, observed anything of it where it was not, to our knowledge and satisfaction, the result of such contrivance. We come, therefore, naturally to conclude that it is invariably so, and, whenever we see indications of this quality, we infer that these

are in like manner evidences and results of the operation of a designing mind.

Whatever may be true of the justness of this conclusion, it is altogether probable that it is one to which we are led in the manner now indicated, that is, as the result of our own experience. The matter admits of a practical test. Suppose one destitute of any such experience, having never contrived anything or seen aught contrived by others—a child, thrown early in life upon some uninhabited island, subsisting on the spontaneous productions of nature, unacquainted with men and their ways. Let such an one discover, at length, on the shore of his solitary dwelling-place, some piece of human mechanism—the watch, with which Paley introduces his beautiful treatise. He has never seen such a thing before; forms no idea, of course, as to what it is, its nature, or use; is quite as likely to think it some strange shell-fish or curious insect as anything else. All reasoning about it, and from it to a producing cause, is, in such a case, out of the question. The child, or child-man, may wonder where it came from, or how it came there, but not who made it. But suppose, now, the nature of this newly-discovered curiosity is in some way made known to him. His wondering eye begins to comprehend the mysteries of its complicated structure. He discerns its use, and the fitness of its parts to subserve that use. Does the idea of a maker, a contriver, necessarily suggest itself to his mind at this stage of the process? Why should it? Whence should it come? He has never known anything to be produced or contrived. What is there in the thing before him to awaken in his mind this new idea? The thing exists;

that is certain; but, for aught he knows, it may always have existed. It is very curious; that is certain; but it may always have been as curious as now. It is capable of use; but, so far as he can see, it may always have been capable of the same. There is nothing in the machine itself to indicate that it ever had a beginning, or to suggest the idea of a cause. He knows not that it is a machine, an effect, a contrivance. To him it is simply an existence — one of the thousand existences which he perceives about him, all to him mysterious; himself,—if his thoughts should ever travel so far into the region of conjecture,—his own existence and origin, the greatest of all mysteries to himself.

How comes, now, this untaught, unobservant being to reach the grand idea of a producing cause? According to Reid, Stuart, and others, he gets it by the operation of a primary law of the mind, which leads him, from the perceived fitness of things to certain ends, to infer at once, and independently of all experience, the existence of design and a designer. According to those who maintain the opposite view, he does not get the idea of producing cause at all, and never will get it, apart from revelation, until his own experience comes to his aid, and guides him to the first steps of an analogy, which is to lead him on to the sublime conclusion that there is a being who made him and all things.

That this is the right solution of the problem, we are strongly inclined to believe. The question returns, however, as on the other hypothesis, whether this inference, this reasoning from what we know to what we do not know, is perfectly just and sound. Assuming that the theory last mentioned is the true one,—that

we reason in this manner only from experience, — and our experience being necessarily limited, — how far, and with what degree of confidence, may we safely follow such a guide? When we reason in this manner from analogy, do we reason always safely and conclusively? We have seen ships built and houses; so far our experience; does it follow with certainty, from this, that worlds are built also, and are in like manner the effect of contrivance? So we conclude. But is the conclusion valid? Here is a man who, from whatever cause, has never as yet exercised the inventive faculties of his mind in the direct contrivance of anything, with reference to the accomplishment of a given end, who has never observed such efforts on the part of others, — has no acquaintance, in fact, with the manifold devices and arts by which a busy, ever-plotting world makes all things subservient to its own purposes. This man is, according to the present argument, without evidence of the existence of a Supreme Being, in other words, of a general designer of all things, since he is without personal experience or knowledge of any such thing as design. He may perceive manifold and notable instances of fitness and adaptation in the material world to the purposes of man's being; but they do not excite his wonder, for he has never known these things to be otherwise; much less are they data from which he can reason to the unknown and the infinite. Thus stands the case with him to-day. To-morrow, for the first time, he invents, he contrives, no matter what — the simplest mechanism of which we can conceive — a wooden peg, a leaf-apron. Now, matters are essentially changed. The mystery of the great universe now opens before him. He has sufficient data now from

which to reason out with unerring certainty the existence of a great first cause. "This wooden peg, this girdle of platted leaves, is a wonderful thing," soliloquizes our new artist; "it's an invention of my own—a contrivance. It would never have existed in its present form, and never have secured its present purpose, had not my own inventive mind formed the design and carried it into execution. Now I understand how it is this goodly world and I myself exist. This peg instructs me. It is manifestly fitted to a useful purpose. It has that fitness only because of my forethought and contrivance. I am authorized, then, to conclude, that whatever seems fitted to some use is, in like manner, the product and result of forethought and intelligent design, and, as all things about me in the universe seem to possess such fitness to useful ends, it follows, from this my specimen of contrivance, that *all things* are likewise contrived." Such, we are to understand, would be the course of thought in his mind; and, according to the philosophy we are now discussing, it is a method of reasoning perfectly fair and conclusive.

Nor is it easy to see what should hinder our artist and newly instructed reasoner from proceeding a little further in the same direction. Ought he not, in consistency with the above reasoning, to conclude on the same principle, that if there be, anywhere else, out of this visible universe and beyond this sphere of observation, any form of existence capable of promoting and bringing about useful ends, having a fitness therefor, *that also* is a contrivance, and so the being whoever he may be, that wrought out and first divined this present system, possessed the qualities that fitted him for such a work, must *par eminence*, be an effect.



But even if we suppose him not to reason consistently, but to stop short of that dread conclusion, it is not evident, that to infer the contrived existence of *everything* which manifests fitness to useful ends, from the known contrivance of *anything* that has fitness, to deduce the mechanism of the universe from the manufacture of the simplest human contrivance, is a method far too bold and sweeping; that the analogy is quite too narrow for the superstructure; that there are, and must be limits to this matter of reasoning; that the results of our experience, the few and little which we know, to the things which we do not know, the infinite, the eternal.

Now it is precisely at this point in the line of reasoning that the enemies of our religion bring their machinery to bear. Because in this world of ours certain things are well adapted to certain uses, it follows, say they, that these things and this world are of necessity contrived. There is no evidence to the contrary. It is merely an inference of our own, and one from insufficient premises. We came to this conclusion by seeing human contrivances and devices. Our experience helps us to it. But it does not follow, that because we contrive and produce certain arrangements and adaptations of things, therefore *all things* which manifest like fitness to certain ends, are the result of contrivance. The watch that I have seen constructed by the skill and ingenuity of man may be to me a sufficient datum from which to conclude that other watches are in like manner produced. But what right have I to infer, that all things in the universe are thus produced, because I have seen one thing made? If, thrown on an uninhabited



should find, in my rambles, some structure of reeds or sticks or stones, capable of affording shelter and like to the habitations which men construct under such circumstances, I might reasonably conclude that some one had been there before me, and that this was his work. But because this hut of reeds or stones is manifestly a contrivance, the result of a producing, intelligent cause, shall I proceed at once to the conclusion that the planet Jupiter is likewise a contrivance, or that the world in which I live is so? I have seen a ring manufactured. Is it therefore certain that the rings of Saturn are likewise produced? Who has ever seen a world made, continues the sceptic, or known of one being made within the sphere of his personal observation? If one had ever made, or seen made, any such thing as a world, then he might reasonably conclude that other worlds were made also. But where is the evidence of it as matters now stand?

Such is substantially the reasoning of Hume in his famous objection to the argument from design. The world, he contends, if it be an effect, is a singular one, unlike anything which we have ever seen produced. We have had no experience in world-making, as we have in watch-making, and cannot therefore reason from the one case to the other.

No one, perhaps, has more resolutely girded himself to encounter this formidable objection than the truly noble Chalmers. Admitting that experience is the basis of all our reasoning in such matters, he contends that in the present case we are not destitute of that basis, but, on the contrary, have all the experience we need. It is not necessary, he contends, that we should take into account the specific end which was intended

to be accomplished in any piece of mechanism, but only that we should see *an* end, and that evidently designed. Having in many instances observed the invariable connection between a designing intellect as cause, and any wise and useful end as the result, we may in all cases where one of these two terms is given infer the existence of the other. It matters not whether we have ever seen a watch made, or any machine having exactly that office and use. We have seen other things made in which was the like fitness of part to part and of means to ends, and in which this fitness has always been the result of contrivance. In a thousand instances we have observed the relation between these two things, the fitness and the contrivance, to be that of antecedent and consequent, of cause and effect. This experience warrants us in concluding that whenever we find in any new instance the same phenomenon, that is, adaptation to an end, we find it there as the result of the same antecedent, that is, a designing intelligence. "Thus we might infer the agency of design in a *watch-maker*, though we never saw a watch made"; and so "we can, on the very same ground, infer the agency of design on the part of a *world-maker*, though we never saw a world made."

This reasoning is valid on the supposition that *there* is such a being as a world-maker; in other words, that the world is an effect — a thing made. The argument proceeds entirely and avowedly on this supposition. It is only *in things made* that we perceive this invariable connection between fitness and an end in the things produced, and designing intelligence in the producer. It is only *in things made*, therefore, that, having one of these terms, we can safely infer the other. If we ex-

tend the inference to other classes of objects, to things not produced, or of whose production and begun existence we have no evidence, we set sail on an ocean of which we know not the shores and bounds, if indeed there be any, or to what strange lands our venturesome course may tend. We drive before the winds with neither chart nor way-mark to guide us, nor any headland in view, *sed coelum undique, et undique pontus*. Nay, it is not difficult to foresee on what rocks we must in the end be driven; for if we reason in this manner from things which we know to be produced to things which we do not know to be so, and conclude that fitness in the latter is the result of contrivance because it is so in the former, then we must include the Deity himself in our catalogue of effects; nor is there any possible way of escaping that conclusion.

Now, beyond doubt, if the world *be* an effect, — a produced and not an eternal existence, — it is the production of an intelligent and designing cause. But *is* it an effect? This is the very gist and substance of the whole question — the very thing we are in pursuit of, but which, after all, is as far from our grasp as ever. The argument of Chalmers does not put us in possession of this, nor, indeed, does it profess to do so. It is a point which must be reached, if at all, in some other way.

The argument from design, however, as usually advanced, is intended and supposed, by those who bring it forward, to establish this very point, that this our world is an effect, a contrivance, and must therefore have had a contriver. They rely upon it as conclusive of this matter. Thus stated, the argument in question must be regarded as logically and essentially defective.

Mere fitness to an end does not of itself, as we have shown, prove design. We must first know that this fitness and the substance to which it pertains is a begun arrangement, a begun existence. Nor is there anything in the mere fitness, however striking that may be, to determine the point whether such fitness, and the subject or substance to which it pertains, be or be not an effect, a begun arrangement, in distinction from existence uncaused and eternal. There is this essential defect in the argument from design as usually stated. It is the defect of Paley and other reasoners. They rely upon the fitness of things, as of itself proving contrivance, irrespective of the question whether this fitness had a *beginning* or not.

The true method of establishing this first, chief, absolutely essential point in natural theology—that the present system of things is an effect, had a beginning and a cause of beginning—has been already indicated. It is not for any process of reasoning, whether from the abstract existence of matter or from its wonderful adaptations and arrangements, to set this matter in a clear light. It is for *science* only to do this. It is for her to trace out for us in nature itself the written demonstration, not simply of the begun, but of the *recently* begun, existence of whatever forms of organized life dwell upon the earth and in its waters; to show us the relics and records of a period quite antecedent to this of ours,—nay, of many such periods; and so to furnish us with the clearest evidence that, whatever may be true of matter in the abstract, this fair and goodly frame of things which we now behold, and wherein we dwell, is an edifice of recent date. And this is enough for the purposes of the argument. To

show that there is an effect, is to show that there is a cause. If these things began, there must have been a beginner.

Now it is at this precise point in the demonstration, and not at any previous stage in the process, that the argument from *design* falls into its proper place and use. The present things, being not eternal but begun existences, must be the result not of blind chance and mere fortuity, nor of an unintelligent, unintentional agent, working without purpose or plan and creating at random; but evidently and most manifestly they are the work of an intelligent and designing cause. There is order about them—forethought, intention, plan about them; they are mechanism, not mere effects; must therefore have had not a cause, merely, but a contriver capable of planning and executing such designs. The wisdom, skill, power of the being who made these things are thus demonstrated; to some extent, also, though not with equal clearness, perhaps, his goodness and his other moral attributes are evinced.

Such would seem to be the true province, the logical value, of the argument from design,—not to prove the world or the present system of things to be an effect, but—that being settled in another manner—to show *what sort* of an effect it is, and what sort of a cause is required to account for it, namely, such a cause as answers to the idea of God. It must follow, not precede, much less set aside, the testimony of physical science as to the origin of the present system. In its proper place it is valuable, indispensable; out of it, of little worth.<sup>1</sup>

Thus far we have considered only those arguments

<sup>1</sup> See note (D.) at the end of this Article.



in natural theology which are derived from the external world. These may seem sufficient. Perhaps they are so; but they are evidently not the whole field and scope of the science. They do not exhaust the theme. Beside this material system and mechanism that is in operation around us, this fair structure and frame of things without, there is in existence another and a different sort of world, immaterial, invisible, not less wonderful, not less replete it should seem with evidence of the mighty Maker — the inner world, the spiritual part of man. This, again, unfolds itself into a twofold division, the mental and the moral nature; each of which furnishes independent evidence for the existence of a first cause. Upon this department of the subject, not less important than that which has already engaged our attention, nor less deserving a thorough investigation, we are compelled by our already exceeded limits to touch briefly, if at all.

III. The argument derived from *the nature and constitution of the human mind*. The argument which we are now to present admits of being stated in different forms, but is based on the essential fact that there is in the human mind an *idea* of such a being as God.

The following is in substance the famous method of *Descartes*.

Among the various ideas which I find in my mind is one of a very peculiar character, unlike all others, and which I am at a loss to account for — the idea, that is, of a being infinite, eternal, independent, immutable, the first cause of all other being. Sublime idea, and most wonderful withal! But how came I by such an idea? How shall the mysterious phenomenon be explained, that into my mind, limited as it is in the



range of its observation and reflection, the thought, the bare conception, of such and so vast a being should enter? Whence came this idea to me? The qualities enumerated are such and so excellent that the more I reflect upon them the more sure I am that the idea of a being in whom they all reside, and that perfectly, could never have originated in my own mind; for how can the *finite* give birth to the *infinite*? Does it originate in the fact that I perceive in myself the negation, the absence of these qualities? But how came I to know that there were such qualities, and that I was destitute of them; how should I know my own imperfection and finiteness, if there were not already in my mind the idea of some perfect, some infinite being with whom to compare myself? Does it proceed from tradition? Then where did the tradition originate? Whence came the idea of such a being to the mind that first entertained the thought, and handed it down to others? Is the mind so formed as to reach the thought spontaneously, by its own natural laws and operations? Then who formed it so? Is it a simple matter of revelation? Then who revealed it? In fine, there is but one way in which we can account for this phenomenon, this idea in man of a being so unlike himself, and that is that the idea has its corresponding reality; that such a being does actually exist; and that this idea of him which we find in our minds, wrought into our very being, *is the stamp and impression of the workman's name, set indelibly upon the work.*

The force and validity of this reasoning depend entirely on its ability to show that the idea of God in the human mind is not only an effect, but such an

effect as absolutely requires God for its cause. This it essays to do. That the idea in question is an effect of something is doubtless true, for it is not in the nature of an idea to be self-existent or uncaused; but that it could not have originated in the mind itself by the mind's own simple action is not so clear. It is not any easy matter, if it be indeed a possible thing, to trace an idea, and especially such an one, to its true source, and determine with precision and certainty its real origin. What is there in this idea which precludes the possibility of its being the product of the mind itself? Is it certain that the finite cannot reach the idea of the infinite? Is it absolutely necessary that there should actually exist, and be known by me to exist, a being more wise or powerful than myself, in order for me to discover that my wisdom and my power are limited? And does not the idea of the unlimited, the infinite, stand over against the idea of the limited and the finite, so that, by the simple law of contrasts, if we have one, we get the other also? Do not the differences which we observe among men — one being greatly superior to another in power, skill, etc. — lead us naturally to conceive of one superior to them all, in whom may reside the perfection of these various qualities, and whose powers may be unlimited? If in any such manner it is possible for the mind, unaided from without, and in the exercise of its own proper faculties, to reach the idea of Deity, then it is not certain but the idea in question may in fact have thus originated. In other words, the existence of the idea does not render certain the actual existence of the *being* corresponding to that idea, inasmuch as the existence of the idea can be accounted for in some

other way. The argument labors at a disadvantage in undertaking to show positively that the idea in question could never have entered the human mind had there been no such being as God in existence. This is more than can be determined with certainty. And yet it deserves to be considered well by us, more than we are wont to do in these exact and logical processes of reason, which call into exercise the intellect, and not the heart, whether, in fact, the idea of such a being as *God*, the infinite, the uncaused, the eternal, the supreme, Author of all being and perfection, be not something in itself more vast and wonderful than we have been accustomed to regard it; whether the simple conception and thought of such a being is not in itself, when duly considered, a grand and sublime mystery—a thought before which all others in the mind ought to bow down in awe and reverence—a thought which *may* be the very *shadow* cast upon the human soul of that mysterious, incomprehensible, unseen one of whose being and presence it dimly informs us. Whatever may be the errors of the Cartesian philosophy, it has at least this element of truth and beauty, that it invests the idea of God in the human mind, regarded as a simple and pure conception, with a dignity and importance, and regards it with a reverence, well befitting its august and real character.

From the same source—the idea formed in the mind—Descartes derives also the following argument for the divine existence, which, though distinct from the one already stated, involves essentially the same principles.

Pertaining to this idea of God which is in the mind

is this peculiarity, as I perceive, by which it differs from all other ideas, namely, that I cannot separate in my thoughts the *ideal* and the *actual* — cannot, as in all other cases, distinguish in my mind the existence from the essence — cannot divest my conception of the Divine Being of this element or idea, that he *does actually exist*. Take away from me the conception which I form of this being as an actual, eternal, necessary existence, and you take away my whole idea of God; nothing is left in my mind, nor can I conceive of him in any other way. It must be, then, that actual, eternal, and necessary existence does really pertain to this being. For how do we determine, in any case, what are the essential qualities of any object? Is it not by observing that such and such qualities pertain to the very nature of the object, and are inseparable from it? I see clearly, for instance, whenever I think of a rectilinear triangle, that its angles are in amount equal to two right angles; cannot conceive of a rectilinear triangle of which this shall not be true. Hence I conclude, that this equality of the angles to two right angles is something inseparable from the nature of such a triangle; and that whether there is any such thing as a triangle actually in existence or not. In like manner, when I think of God, the idea invariably presents itself of a being to whom actual and real existence pertains. Existence pertains to the highest perfection; and my only idea of God is that of a being every way perfect. I can no more conceive of an imperfect God, i.e. a God existing only in name or idea or supposition, and not in reality, than I can conceive of a triangle the sum of whose angles shall be less than two right angles.

This argument, like the preceding, is based on that cardinal doctrine of the Cartesian system, that every pure and simple idea has its corresponding objective reality, from which it originates, and of which it is but the *tableau* or image; and that whatever pertains inseparably and essentially to the idea belongs also invariably to the reality—a principle we cannot here stay to discuss. That there is a fallacy, however, in the argument now stated, is obvious. It does not follow, because I conceive of a triangle possessing a certain property, and never think of it otherwise, that any such triangle *exists*, but only that *if* it exists, then this property belongs to it. Neither does it follow that any such being as God exists, simply because I conceive of him as existing, and as possessing certain properties, as eternal, independent, and necessary being; but only that *if* such a being exists, then these qualities may be supposed to belong to him. Nothing is in reality determined as to the previous question, whether there really is such a being.

Aside from this, it admits of question whether the premise is correct; whether there is, really and of necessity, this alleged difference between our ideas of God and our ideas of other objects; whether we cannot, if we will, conceive of God otherwise than as a real, actual existence, in the same sense that we can conceive of a star of a certain magnitude and brilliancy, and having a certain position in the firmament, without at the same time being sure that such a star actually exists. But on this we cannot dwell.

It is somewhat remarkable that Dr. Clarke, though professing great abhorrence of the Cartesian philosophy and method of reasoning, should himself unconsciously

have constructed an argument very like the one now presented. We refer to that part of his treatise in which he discourses respecting "the absolute impossibility of destroying or removing some *ideas*, as of eternity and immensity, which therefore must be modes or attributes of a necessary being actually existing." "For," continues he, "if I have in my mind an idea of a thing, and cannot possibly in my imagination take away the idea of that thing as actually existing, any more than I can change or take away the idea of the equality of twice two to four, the certainty of the *existence* of that thing is the same, and stands on the same foundation, as the certainty of the other *relation*. For the relation of equality between twice two and four has no *other* certainty but *this*, that I *cannot*, without a contradiction, *change* or *take away* the *idea* of that relation."<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere he thus expresses the same thing: "We always find in our minds some ideas, as of *infinity* and *eternity*, which to remove, that is, to suppose that there is no being, no substance in the universe to which these attributes or modes of existence are necessarily inherent, is a contradiction in the very terms. For modes and attributes exist only by the *substance* to which they belong. Now he that can suppose eternity and immensity removed out of the universe, may, if he please, as easily remove the relation of equality between twice two and four."<sup>2</sup>

This argument is based evidently on the assumption that immensity and eternity are *attributes of substance or being*—an assumption purely gratuitous and without proof. Space answers both these conditions, possesses both these qualities or attributes—eternity and im-

<sup>1</sup> Demonstration, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Demonstration, p. 15.



mentality. Yet space is not being, much less is it God. With all respect then, for the truly great man who thus reasons, we can but regard this as an argument more specious than solid, about which the thing chiefly wonderful is, how it could ever have misled or perplexed a truly discerning mind.

Respecting the ideal argument as a whole, the conclusion at which, after a candid and thorough examination, the lover of truth will be likely to arrive, would seem to be this: that while the idea which the human mind forms of God, and the fact that it does of its own accord, as it would seem, reach and entertain that wonderful idea, do afford strong *presumptive evidence* of the existence of such a being, and may well and greatly strengthen our belief in that existence derived from other sources, they cannot be regarded as in themselves furnishing clear and absolute demonstration of that great truth. For this we must look elsewhere.

IV. It remains for us to discuss only the argument derived from the *moral constitution of man*.

Among the various active principles and powers of the human soul, each having its appropriate object and sphere, and tending each to a certain definite result, there is observed one whose office and operation it seems to be to preside over all the rest—the regulator, as it may not inaptly be termed, or law-power, of the whole moral machinery in its various and complicated movements. This is the principle which we call *conscience*, whose established authority in the soul is one of the most remarkable phenomena in its history and constitution.

It has indeed been contended by some that this is by no means, in fact, a universal and invariable law—

that men, and even whole tribes and nations, are to be found who seem to have no conscience. Now, it is doubtless true that many are to be found in the world who do not obey this law of the inner being — in whom it comes by desuetude to be a silent and virtually dead letter; but certainly there is a palpable and broad distinction between the authority, and the actual power of a law. That which is a law *de jure* may not in all cases be a law *de facto*. It is sufficient that there is in man a moral principle or power whose object and evident legitimate office is to control his moral action; and that, when left to its own proper functions, unperverted, undestroyed, it does execute that office, not without a sort of majesty and truly regal sway. It is no evidence against the existence and rightful authority of a king in the land, that he is for the time driven from his palace and his throne by a revolutionary faction; nor against the existence and rightful authority of a statute, that, in a state of anarchy and rebellion, men no longer recognize its right or submit to its control. This distinction between the *lex de jure* and the *lex de facto*, as regards the human conscience — a distinction which was first clearly pointed out by Bishop Butler, and has been fully elaborated by Chalmers — is at once a very plain and a very important distinction, and constitutes a sufficient answer to the objection now stated.

Upon this observed peculiarity in the moral constitution, this law of our nature, theologians have constructed a favorite and powerful argument in proof of the divine existence. Here is a law. Where and what is the law-maker? Here is the various machinery of court. Is there not somewhere a legislator and

judge? So it would seem; and so, we presume, men would naturally and generally conclude. The evidence may be regarded, however, as presumptive, rather than demonstrative, when we come to look more closely at it, inasmuch as it proceeds upon the supposition that the soul of man is a creation. Here, says the reasoner, is a piece of curious mechanism,—a watch,—whose movements are all nicely controlled by an adjustment called the regulator, which certainly seems to have been intended for this very purpose. Is there not somewhere an intelligent contriver and controller of these movements? Precisely such is the office of conscience in the human soul, and precisely such its testimony as to the existence, somewhere, of a power capable of appointing and enforcing this authority. Unquestionably, we reply, if there be here veritable regulation, there must be somewhere a regulator; if mechanism, then a maker. But are we sure of the premises? What if the watch to which this apparatus belongs should fail to be proved a machine? What if the soul of man, instead of being a creation,—a thing made,—should turn out to be an uncaused and self-existent thing? Then, for aught we know, this regulating apparatus in both watch and soul may have always pertained to them, and in full play, as an integral part of themselves. Let it be granted, or first proved, that man himself—this spiritual, conscious, moral being which we call the soul—is a *created* existence; that there is, in other words, true and real mechanism here, that what we call the law of conscience is a bona fide law, and not simply a mode in which the spiritual nature has always acted, that it is an arrangement, a *begun* thing, and it follows, of

course, that there is somewhere, or at least was, a beginner and producer thereof. But how are we to know this? That which is here assumed is the very thing to be proved, the very point we seek to establish. Nor is it from the inspection of the mind itself, or of the watch itself, independently of other sources of information, that this is to be learned. The regulator, in itself considered, cannot inform us whether it has always existed and operated as at present, or whether it is a piece of pure contrivance and mechanism; neither can the law of the human soul which we term conscience. The question is, Have we truly and properly a law—a creation—a contrived and originated property of a begun and continued existence. Not until this point is settled can we appeal to the regulating power or principle, in the watch or in the soul, as evidence clear and positive of the existence of a being extrinsic to themselves, who is in reality the controller and governor, as he was the contriver, of these truly wonderful movements.

Now we do not deny that the argument from our moral nature, as also that from design, of which we have already treated, does furnish evidence of a certain kind, *presumptive* evidence, and that in a high degree, of the existence of a Supreme Being; that it serves greatly to strengthen our belief already formed in such a being; that it corroborates the evidence derived from other sources, and brings it very near and closely home to us; nay, further, that it is in itself sufficient to bring the mind *practically* to the conviction that there is a God, and that its actual operation in the world as we find it is to this effect; but only that it is not—what in theology, and as the basis of a science, we

demand and must in some way obtain — a sure and positive evidence of this great truth. For nothing can be plainer than that a kind or degree of evidence which may be amply sufficient to guide one's mind and determine one's course and conduct in the practical affairs of life, may not be a sufficient basis on which to lay the firm and sure foundations of a science.

The moral argument properly comes in, then, so far as the theologian is concerned, not to demonstrate the existence of God, but to bear important testimony respecting his character and attributes when once that previous point is settled; to show what sort of a being God is; and in this respect it is one of the most valuable and powerful arguments in the whole compass of natural theology.

Especially does this principle of conscience manifest the *righteousness* of God. If he were not himself a righteous being and a lover of rectitude, he would not have implanted, as he has, this law of the right, and this love of it, in every human bosom. As it is, he has so made man that by the very constitution of his being, and aside from any external or revealed law, he is placed under obligation to do right. There is a law within him, prior to anything from without, written on, or rather wrought into, the soul itself, as the figure is woven into the fabric which it adorns. The soul of man, approving of the true and the right, whether it will or no, wherever these are discerned, points with unerring certainty to that which is the source of this its moral power, viz. the rectitude of the divine character; even as the poised steel, turning ever to the mysterious north, indicates the existence of that unknown power which from afar controls all its vibrations,



whose influence it ever feels, and at whose presence it trembles.

The principle of conscience establishes also the inflexible *justice* of God. It has its awards and punishments. It visits the evil-doer with the terrible stings of guilt and remorse, and throws over him the deep, chill shadow of a coming retribution. It dashes into every cup of forbidden pleasure the unfailing, inseparable element of consequent wretchedness. It links together human crime and human suffering, the vices and the miseries of men, so that the one shall follow the other invariably, as sound and echo pursue each other along the mountain side. There is with it no respect of persons, no taking of bribes. With its whip of scorpions it pursues the wrong-doer, whoever he may be, wherever he may go; tracks him into every obscurity, finds him out in the deepest retirement and the darkest night; overtakes him in his swiftest escape; and, like the terrible avenger, pursues and hangs over him wherever he takes his way.

On the other hand, the pleasure which, according to the working of this same law, dispensing its awards as well as its punishments, attends all virtuous and right action, is not less a proof of the *divine benevolence*. Thus to connect inseparably together right-doing and happiness, wrong-doing and misery, — so to construct and constitute the mind, the spiritual nature, that by its own natural working this great end shall be secured; — this *self-regulating power*, in other words, of the moral machinery, — is in itself one of the highest evidences, not simply of the divine wisdom and skill, but (what is much more to the purpose, and more important to establish) of the *goodness* of God. We can



conceive that man might have been so constituted that, while under the highest obligations to virtue, nevertheless every instance of right action should be accompanied, not as now, with a verdict of self-approval, and that purest of all pleasures, the happiness which he feels who is conscious of right intentions and a conduct void of offence toward God and man, but, on the contrary, with pain and self-reproach and the wretchedness of an unsatisfied nature; while, on the other hand, evil action and all wrong-doing should secure the enjoyment of a present gratification and a consequent and enduring happiness. We can conceive that a malevolent being *would* have so constituted his creatures, arraying the moral principles of the soul against its innate love of happiness, placing in antagonism what are now intimately and inseparably joined, and thus removing at once what are now the strongest incentives to virtue and consequent well-being. Indeed, we can have no clearer and more certain indication that benevolence constitutes a leading trait in the divine character, than the fact we are now considering, that he has actually constituted his moral creatures in such a way that duty and happiness shall with them be ever concomitant; that the moral nature shall approve of that which the divine law requires; that the ways of virtue are ever found to be ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace. In truth, the whole phenomena of conscience evince most clearly to the observant and thoughtful mind the highest regard, on the part of the Creator, for the well-being of man, which is only another expression for the highest and purest benevolence.

It would seem to be, then, the great advantage of

the argument now under discussion, as compared with those previously named, that it brings into bold relief and places in a clear, strong light, the *moral character* of God; in which respect the material or physical argument is, it must be confessed, in a measure defective. We can show, from the arrangements of the material world, the power, the wisdom, the skill of the mighty builder. But what is there in external nature to demonstrate his righteousness, his justice, his goodness? Indications of these attributes, doubtless, there may be; hardly, as we think, proofs. The physical structure of the shark affords as clear evidence of the skill of the Creator, as do the anatomy and organization of the dolphin or the flying fish. It would not, however, on the whole, be a fortunate selection from which to argue the divine benevolence, inasmuch as the various and truly skilful arrangements and contrivances, which admirably conduce to the welfare of the creature in question, seem not, on the whole, so well adapted, either in theory or practice, to the safety and happiness of his *fellow* creatures. Indeed, the great palpable fact that suffering seems to have entered as an element into the very plan and structure—the first draft, so to speak—of this whole system of things, reaching back beyond the history and existence of man himself on the globe; that the earliest records and relics of animal life and organization, in whatever form of being, and in whatever distant and otherwise unknown epoch of our earth's history, are records and traces also of the physical suffering with which that existence terminated and that life passed away; this, we say, is a problem not as yet duly pondered, it would seem, by those who find no difficulty in making out a complete

idea and demonstration of God from external nature. The truth is, as we are strongly inclined to believe, that while the material universe furnishes abundant proof of the existence and natural perfections of the Deity, his moral attributes are fully exhibited only in the moral realm. And this is, in fact, precisely what we might reasonably have anticipated.

To sum up in few words what has been advanced in the present essay: We have sought to ascertain definitely what it is which natural theology has to do, and the best way of doing it; in other words, the true *province* and the true *methods* of the science. The things to be done we find to be these two: First, to bring forward from the existing universe something which we can clearly show to be an effect; and then to show that this effect is such as to require for its producing cause all that which we include in the idea of Deity. For the working of this twofold problem, we find an array of arguments drawn from these several sources — *metaphysics*, *physics*, the department of *mind*, the department of *morals*. Of these, it is in the power of *physics* only, and not of *metaphysics*, if the preceding observations and reasonings are correct, to show clearly that the present things had a beginning; in other words, that the world itself, the universe of which we form a part, is in truth an effect. Nor will physics, even, as commonly employed, do this. The fitness of means to ends, the various instances which we find in the material universe of what we call design and what seems to us like arrangement and contrivance, do not show this; inasmuch as we must first know that these arrangements themselves have had a beginning, and are not uncaused and self-existent qualities of an uncaused

and self-existent substance. What we see of this sort in the universe may be sufficient to suggest the idea of a God, and render it altogether probable that such a being exists; may, indeed, convince most minds that such is the fact; may greatly strengthen and corroborate the evidence derived from other sources; but cannot clearly and certainly establish that which we seek to know. In order to establish this point on a sure basis, we must call to our aid a class of sciences hitherto much neglected, and even regarded with distrust by theological writers, but which, we believe, will yet be found, not harmless merely, not servicable merely, but indispensable, it may be, to the exact and clear exhibition, and sure foundation, of the truths involved in natural theology.

This point established, that the present order of things is not without beginning, and the way is clear. Reason assures us that if there be a beginning, there must be also a beginner; if an effect, a cause; and that, if we go back far enough, we must come at last to that which is the source of all other being, itself uncaused, self-existent, eternal. This is God, but yet not the whole of God, not the complete idea that we form of Deity. And here the argument from design falls into place, and enables us to infer that the builder of this goodly frame possesses intelligence, power, wisdom, skill, if not absolutely unlimited, — and of that we cannot be sure as yet, inasmuch as from the finite we cannot strictly demonstrate the infinite, — yet vast and altogether beyond our power of comprehension. Lastly, the moral nature of man, the noblest department of those divine works which lie within the narrow circle of our vision, demonstrates to us the higher and

nobler attributes of Deity — his righteousness, justice, and benevolence.

These things ascertained and clearly established, natural theology has nothing further to do. Its work is accomplished. Whatever else we wish to know of God, we are to look for it not in his works, but in his word; not creation, but revelation, is from this point to be our guide.

## NOTES.

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### NOTE A. — Page 242.

The argument proceeds on the supposition that if the world is eternal it is also independent or self-existent. It admits of question, however, whether this does of necessity follow. That which is self-existent must, indeed, be eternal, since we cannot suppose that which has the ground of its being in itself not to have always existed; but is that which is eternal of necessity self-existent? Is it not possible there may be an eternal cause, eternally producing effects, which effects will then be co-eternal with the cause — effects, but not effects produced in time; as light may be called co-eval with the sun from which it emanates? .

This is a distinction actually made by the ancient philosophers. Thus both Plato and Aristotle seem to have regarded the world as eternal, but by no means as self-existing. On the contrary, they clearly held it to be the work of an intelligent being — a creation, though not in time. “That is,” says Dr. Clarke,<sup>1</sup> “that the will of God and his power of acting being necessarily as eternal as his essence, the effects of that will and power might be supposed co-eval to the will and power themselves, in the same manner as light would eternally proceed from the sun, or a shadow from the interposed body, or an impression from an impressed seal, if the respective causes of these effects were supposed eternal.” According to this view, it would not be necessary to establish the non-eternity of the world in order to establish the existence of a first cause.

Closely analogous to this view is the idea of eternal generation, as held so widely by the older theologians — the Son proceeding from the Father, but not in time — co-eternal with the eternal cause.

<sup>1</sup> Demonstration, etc., p. 85.



## NOTE B. — Page 247.

No doubt the dependence of part on part and generation on generation, *naturally suggests* the dependence of the series as a whole, and leads the mind to look for some ground of being, some originating cause, out of the series itself. This we would by no means deny; and that the mind naturally thus reasons is certainly a presumption in favor of the conclusion thus reached. But that is not to the point and purpose of the present argument. The thing to be shown, and which the argument now under discussion attempts to show, is not the *probability* or *improbability* of an infinite series of finite and dependent causes, but the utter *impossibility* of such a thing — that the very supposition of such a series involves contradiction and absurdity. And this, we suspect, is more than can be shown.

But even if it were shown, the argument in question is as far as ever from proving the non-eternity of the world. For even granting all that is now claimed, that is, that a series of successive and dependent parts cannot be infinitely extended, but must have out of itself some ground of being on which the whole series depends, there still remains the possible supposition that this independent and original something, external to the series and the ground of its being, may still be some principle inherent in nature itself — some law or force, eternally existing and eternally active, giving rise to the various successive forms and orders of animal and vegetable organizations. Not everything in nature is included in the series of successive and dependent parts. There are laws and forces that for aught we know may have been in existence and in action from eternity. As from eternity it has been true that two and two are four, so from eternity it may have been true that some grand universal law has existed, governing the relation of every particle of matter in the universe to every other, in obedience to which law the successive forms of life and organization have appeared on the earth, and disappeared to be followed by other generations in endless succession. Thus, while every part is dependent, and the series itself dependent, having the ground of its being in something out of itself, that something is nevertheless not external to nature itself, but only to the series of which it is the ground and cause of being. That such is not the case — that the independent and eternal ground of being is not inherent in or any part, principle, or law.

of nature itself, — it is not for any method of *a priori* or metaphysical reasoning to show, but must be shown, if at all, by calling to our aid the facts of science.

NOTE C. — Page 257.

The present article is intended simply as a critique on the common methods of argument in natural theology. Its object is to ascertain the value of those methods, their strength and their weakness, and thus to indicate the true method of procedure, rather than to present in full the argument as thus constructed. This was not proposed.

The evidence for the non-eternity of the world, as furnished by science, may be thus stated *in brief*.

a. *No evidence* in nature itself to the contrary — no appearance of being unproduced and eternal, but the contrary.

b. *General conviction* of the race that it had a beginning — conviction with which all tradition and history concur.

c. *Facts* go to show that the present order of things had a beginning. *Geology* shows it — carries us back to the time when successively the various forms of animal and vegetable life disappear, and finally all trace of organization is lost; thus clearly indicating that there is a point further on in the region of time when the world itself began to be. *Astronomy* shows it — admits the existence of a resisting medium in space which must ultimately impede the movement of the planets, and bring them in course of time to a standstill. Millions of ages might be required for this result: but still the fact that it has not occurred shows that the world is not eternal.

d. Science shows a *progressive order of creation* — certain great eras or epochs, distinctly marked, successive and progressive, advancing from lower to higher forms of life and organization. This, of course, implies the non-eternity of the present cosmos.

e. The same thing is further evident from the occasional *interruptions* and *destructive* changes which science shows to have taken place in the order of nature, followed by successive renewals or creations. This, moreover, cannot be the work of a law inherent in nature itself.

NOTE D. — Page 271

It is by no means the intention of the present article to set aside or at all diminish the real value of the argument from design, which

holds an important place in natural theology, but rather to give it its due and proper weight by assigning it its true position. Whether mere facts of order and adaptation in themselves prove design, and so a beginning and a beginner, may well admit of question. That there is nothing absurd or inconsistent in supposing them uncaused, is evident from the fact that whenever in our thought we reach an ultimate cause, we must of necessity admit this order and adaptation to be characteristic of that cause; they exist, then, in that case, as themselves unproduced. On the supposition, therefore, of the materialist and the rationalist, that nature is itself ultimate, these marks of order and adaptation not only may but do exist uncaused.

But where these facts are, and can be shown to be, *effects* — *produced* arrangements — that they are the work of an intelligent and designing cause is a conclusion which forces itself irresistibly upon the mind. An effect which exhibits evidence of order, arrangement, adaptation to given ends, exhibits also evidence of design, and must not only have had a cause, but an intelligent and contriving cause. Now this is precisely what can be shown in respect to the order and arrangements of the natural world — that they are effects, produced arrangements, and so must have had an intelligent producer. And this is precisely the point in the line of defence where the argument from design becomes of great value. The true function and worth of the argument, properly handled, is not to show the existence of a cause, for any event or effect shows that; nor yet of a *first* cause, for that is admitted by both theist and materialist; but an *intelligent* first cause, adapting and contriving — something more than a mere force or law of nature. These facts of order and arrangement, says the materialist, which abound in nature, and which are, as you claim, the effects of some producing cause, may they not be produced by *some force or some law inherent in nature itself*? Such is the hypothesis of the rationalist and materialist. To this we reply: They are effects of *such a nature* as require for their production not merely a cause, but an *intelligent* cause, working consciously and intentionally to a given end; and a law of nature is not such a cause, works not in that manner. A law that shall produce such effects requires itself a producer. The contrivance and intelligence, not being in the law itself, must lie back of it, and be itself the ultimate cause both of the law and its results.

Such we conceive to be the true place and province of the argument from design.

The fault in the argument from design, as that argument is usually presented, is forcibly stated by Mahan in his recent treatise on Natural Theology:

“The syllogism referred to is this:

“Marks of design, that is, facts of order, imply an intelligent cause of such facts.

“The universe presents such facts.

“Therefore the universe has an intelligent author.

“Every one, on a moment's reflection, will perceive that the minor premise of this syllogism presents an absolutely universally admitted truth. No one, whether he is a theist or an anti-theist, does or can doubt, or was ever known to deny, that facts of order do exist in the universe around us. The major premise, on the other hand, is denied by all anti-theists of every school. In this denial, also, they are sustained by many of the first thinkers among the theists. . . . . On the conduct of the argument, also, we have this one very singular and, as far as our knowledge extends, unexampled phenomenon. The major or disputed premise is very seldom, aside from a few illustrations, argued at all; while the minor, the universally admitted one, is argued as if the whole issue depended exclusively upon sustaining its validity. The theistic syllogism, therefore, as commonly stated and argued, presents the following very singular violations of all the laws of true scientific procedure, to wit, a syllogism with a disputed major and a universally admitted minor premise; while the former is assumed as a universally admitted principle, and the latter argued as the only disputed premise. Who can wonder that even the Christian student, when traversing such works as that of Paley, begins, it may be for the first time in his life, to doubt the possibility of valid proof of the fundamental article of all religion, the being of God? Nothing higher can reasonably be expected from such a method” (pp. 106, 107).

## II.

### THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.<sup>1</sup>

THE attention of the religious community has been very generally drawn of late to the long-agitated, much-disputed, much-calumniated doctrine of the Trinity. Recent discussions have given new interest and importance to the subject—a subject which can never be without interest, indeed, to the reflecting mind, but upon which, at the present moment, the most diverse and conflicting opinions are found to prevail among those who are at once the sincere friends and the earnest champions of truth. By some the divine tri-personality, by others the divine unity, is regarded as the element of chief importance, and is earnestly contended for, as in danger of being overlooked. The minds of men are inquiring more earnestly now than at any time, perhaps, for the last fifty years, for some definite, true, and solid ground of belief touching these matters. A patient and careful *re-examination* of the whole subject seems to be demanded. We hope that the present article will contribute in some degree to this result, at least by inducing the reader to enter for himself upon such re-examination.

The Scriptures in the plainest terms assert the unity of God, and as plainly do they ascribe divinity to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Nowhere, however, do they

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put these things together by way of explanation. Nor do they offer any solution of the apparent discrepancy.

The moment we undertake to do this for ourselves, we find ourselves in difficulty—a difficulty which seems insurmountable, and of which we become only the more thoroughly and painfully conscious by all our efforts to overcome it.

For any such investigation, the Scriptures afford us no other aid, than simply to furnish the correct data which must lie at the basis of all our reasoning. This, however important and even indispensable in itself, does not remove the labor or the difficulty of the undertaking.

Such being the state of the case,—the subject one involved in difficulty, and the Scriptures furnishing no direct information or assistance with regard to it,—shall we pass the matter by as something quite inexplicable and beyond our reach, which it is of no use for us to investigate, and which it is even presumptuous for us to attempt? Shall we regard the silence of Scripture as an indication that God does not design to unfold this mystery of his being to us creatures of yesterday, who know nothing?

So some may possibly conclude. And yet it would seem as if every man who reads the Bible, and meditates on what he reads, must sometimes put these two things together in his mind,—the unity of God, the divinity of Jesus Christ and of the Spirit,—and compare them, and ask himself how these truths consist with each other, and seek in his thoughts some solution of the problem, some explanation of the apparent discrepancy. Every reflecting man will do this. Some method of meeting this difficulty, some theory respect-



ing the matter, he will be likely to have; and if it is not a right, then it will surely be a wrong theory. For centuries this subject has been the fruitful source of error, discussion, contention, heresy, sect, in the Christian world. This only shows, not the folly and fruitlessness of thinking on these things at all, but the importance of thinking clearly and rightly on them.

The proper inquiry would seem to be, What view of this matter is, on the whole, most in accordance with the teaching of Scripture? In the absence of any direct, positive testimony on the point, what may be fairly and legitimately *inferred*, from what the Bible does affirm respecting the Divine Being?

The subject is one which should, however, be approached with awe. It is no theme for proud and vain philosophizing or self-confident speculation. He who approaches it should come humbly, and put off the shoe from his foot; for he is to tread on sacred ground. Reverently let him come, as Moses drew near the bush that burned, as the elders of Israel approached the mount that quaked, and beheld from afar the God of their fathers.

The theme before us does not properly involve the discussion of the divine unity, nor the true and proper divinity of the Son and Spirit; but, assuming these doctrines to be clearly taught in the Scriptures, and the proof of them already before the mind, the specific inquiry then arises, How do these two things consist with each other? It is just at this point that we meet the doctrine of the trinity, properly speaking. Just here all our inquiries and all our difficulties begin.

There are two summary methods of disposing of the whole subject — methods not as satisfactory, however,

as they are summary. One is, to deny that there is any room for inquiry or reasoning in the case—to resolve the whole subject into mystery, and there leave it, thus shutting out all investigation. Mystery, doubtless, there is, pertaining to the subject of the divine existence; some things respecting it not known, and not to be known by us. Possibly, however, the mystery may arise, in part, from our own want of clear perception, and definite statement. The fault may be in great measure our own. Mystery is one thing, and mystification is another. We do well to see to it that there is not in our mode of treating the subject something of the latter element, along with the former. Mystery is one thing, and contradiction in terms is another. How are we to show that we are not justly chargeable with the latter? If we have too much reverence for the Scriptures to admit for a moment that they contain contradictions, there may be minds less reverent, and it becomes us so to state our belief, and so to interpret our Bibles, that these less reverent minds shall not find in our statements what they can fairly construe into, and what to them shall really seem to imply and amount to, absolute contradictions. It is not sufficient to make statements of which we do not ourselves see the consistency, and then dismiss the whole matter with the remark that the subject is one involved in mystery.

The other method is to deny the premises in order to clear the difficulty—to cut what we cannot untie. Equally unsatisfactory and unphilosophical is this method. The Scriptures teach the divinity of the Son and of the Spirit as clearly as they teach the unity of God. They attach as much importance to the one

doctrine as to the other. It would never have occurred, probably, to any one receiving the Scriptures, to doubt or call in question the former truth, were it not for the apparent difficulty of reconciling that with the latter. No candid mind will be satisfied, however, with any such method of meeting the difficulty as that now under consideration. For the question at once arises, What right have we to sacrifice either of these doctrines to the other, inasmuch as they rest each upon the same authority, and seem to be supported each by the same kind and degree of evidence? And if either is to be sacrificed to the other, which shall it be? What reason is there for preferring one to the other? What right have we to say *this* shall stand, and not *that*? One has no more right to start with the doctrine of the divine unity, and say, "God is one, therefore Jesus Christ cannot be God," than another has to take as his starting-point the true and proper divinity of Christ, and say, "Therefore God is not one, and those passages which seem to teach this are to be taken in a modified sense." Indeed, if one were driven to take either of these positions, the latter certainly would be preferable; for the passages which teach the unity of God are neither so many in number, nor so plain, direct, and positive, in their language, as those which teach the divinity of Jesus Christ.

Rejecting, then, at once, such outside and summary methods of dealing with the subject, no sooner do we set ourselves fairly and earnestly to meet the case, than we perceive that there are these three distinct and essential elements to be kept in view, compared, and harmonized — the DIVINE UNITY; the INDIVIDUALITY of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit; the DIVINITY of

each. That only can be the true method of stating and explaining the doctrine of the divine existence, which shall place these three elements in harmony with each other in their just and due proportions, permitting no one of them to be lost sight of, no one of them to stand in real or even apparent contradiction to either of the others.

It is perfectly obvious, from this outline or analysis of the subject, that nothing would be easier than so to state the doctrine of the divine existence as to involve real and irreconcilable contradiction; nay, that without great care and precision in the use of terms it will inevitably be so stated. If you make the unity of the Supreme Being to be absolute, strict, numerical unity, and at the same time admit the distinct individuality (in the strict and proper sense of the word) of the Son and the Spirit, then you cannot consistently affirm that the Son and the Spirit are truly and properly divine, but only in some secondary and modified sense; and to assert their divinity in the strict and absolute sense is, in such a case, absolute self-contradiction. It is to affirm and to deny with the same breath. If, on the other hand, you start with the absolute and true divinity of Christ and of the Spirit, and also maintain their distinct, separate individuality, in the ordinary sense of that term, you can no longer consistently maintain the strict numerical unity of the Godhead, but only a specific unity or homogeneousness of the three divine persons.

For want of care on this point, and of a well-defined perception of the relations of these three elements to each other, much confusion has arisen; and to this source, also, many of the objections may be traced

which, not without reason, it must be confessed, have at various times been urged against the doctrine of the Trinity thus stated.

It is further evident that, in order to a clear, consistent statement of the doctrine, some one of these three elementary ideas must be somewhat modified so as to coincide with the others. Every one who undertakes to explain and elucidate this subject feels the necessity of this, and virtually, whether consciously or not, proceeds on this principle. It is worthy of note that the various theories and opinions which at any time in the lapse of centuries, since the matter came under discussion in the Christian church, have been proposed with reference to this doctrine, have all been so many efforts to solve the problem in this way, namely, by modifying some one of these three distinctive and essential elements. This is, in fact, the only way in which it was possible to proceed. All such theories and proposed methods, however many and various, may therefore be reduced essentially to *three*; and it will aid us in our present investigation to be able thus to grasp by a few threads, as it were, the whole history of the doctrine. Let us then, for a moment, pursue this analysis.

If we suppose the first and second of these essential elements to be retained in their strict and full sense, and the third to be modified so as to meet them, we obtain the following statement: God is one, absolutely, numerically one. The Son and the Spirit are individually and properly distinct from the Father, as any conscious intelligent existence is distinct from any other. The Father alone, therefore, is strictly and in the highest sense divine; the Son and Spirit are divine only in a limited and modified sense. This, in its

essential features, is the *Arian* theory, though much older than Arius. It was the theory of Origen and the Platonic fathers of the second and third century. If, on the contrary, we maintain in their integrity the second and third of these elements, and modify the first, we obtain directly the opposite view, namely, the Son and the Spirit are really and absolutely divine, as truly so, and in the same sense, as the Father. They possess, likewise, distinct individuality. Each thinks, feels, wills, acts for himself. The Father, Son, and Spirit are one, therefore, not in the absolute and strict sense, but only specifically, as Paul and John are one, — that is, in sentiment, feeling, principle, etc., — or else one by reason of partaking one and the same nature. This may be called the *tritheistic* theory. The early Christian fathers seem generally to have taken essentially this view. For two or three centuries it was the prevailing orthodox view. It entered largely into the discussions of the *Nicene* Council. Many modern trinitarians would also fall into this class were their views definitely stated and closely analyzed.

If, now, we retain in their strict sense and form the first and the third of these elements, and so shape the second as to coincide, we obtain the following statement of the doctrine. God is strictly, absolutely one. The Son and Spirit are really and absolutely divine. But they are not individually distinct from the Father, as separate existences. Their individuality is not that of three men or three angels, or three distinct intelligent beings of any sort ; but they constitute, in fact, *one* being, and possess individuality only in a limited and modified sense.

We have now the theory which in its essential fea-



tures, though with various modifications, has been generally held in modern times by orthodox trinitarians; substantially the theory of Calvin and his disciples. Its distinctive characteristic is a modification of the element of *individuality*. While it maintains the full and absolute divinity of the Son and of the Spirit, it holds also the strict, absolute unity of God — that he is one in essence or being — numerically, and not merely specifically one. It admits at the same time a distinction to exist in the nature of the Godhead, which distinction — for want of a better name, and in the absence of *any* word that in the poverty of human language and human conception can exactly describe or define what man does but imperfectly comprehend — it terms hypostasis, or person; a distinction not clearly understood by us, but the existence of which is plainly revealed; a distinction *existing from eternity*, but *developed in time* and in the scheme of redemption, by the incarnation and mission of the Logos, and by the office of the Holy Spirit in renewing and sanctifying the hearts of men.

Such is substantially the modern Trinitarian theory. While it admits a certain distinction eternally existing in the nature of the Godhead, to which it applies the term hypostasis, or subsistence, or person, it does not for a moment attach to this distinction the idea of so many separate individual existences. Not in any such sense does it employ the word person. Calvin himself is careful distinctly to disavow any such idea.<sup>1</sup> The three hypostases, subsistences, or persons are *not* three distinct spiritual existences, three *minds*, acting, devising, willing, each for itself; they denote simply

<sup>1</sup> See note (A.) at the end of this Article.

such a distinction as can belong to a being strictly and numerically one. Just what that distinction is, just what relation these hypostases hold to each other and to that divine nature in which they subsist, it is neither for this theory nor any other to define. Neither Calvin has attempted this, nor any other man in his right mind.

The characteristic feature, as we have observed, of this theory, as distinguished from others, is a limitation of the element of individuality. We have but to carry out this principle, however, to its extreme, and we strike another of those ancient and diverging paths, along which the human mind has wandered in its anxious but erring search for truth. Press this limitation so far as virtually to *deny* the existence of any personal distinction in the Deity prior to the manifestations made of himself in time and to man, and we stand at once on the old *Monarchian*, or, more strictly speaking, the *Patri-Passian*, ground. Praxeas, Noëtius, and Sabellius went that way. While they held the supreme divinity of Christ, they denied his distinct personal subsistence as the Logos prior to the incarnation. The Deity, ever one and the same in all the manifestations of himself to man, now assumes the character and office of Father, now of Son, and now of Holy Spirit. These are not distinctions eternally existing in the nature of the Deity, but simply modal developments, the forms under which he passes before men; like the successive transformations of Vishnu in the Indian mythology. Sabellius speaks of *μία ὑπόστασις*, by which he means person or subject, and *τρία πρόσωπα*, meaning by the latter term, forms, manifestations, or works. The divinity of *Μονάς*, embodying itself in the Logos or Son, is not distinct from, but

identical with, the *Monas*, embodying itself under the form of the Spirit. The whole Deity goes into each; and back of these impersonations, and prior to them, there is in the divine nature itself no distinction of persons.

Diverse as this scheme is from the proper trinitarian theory, it has nevertheless in common with it these two things; it starts from the same point, and proceeds in the same direction. In common with the other, it seeks to solve the problem of the Trinity by a limitation, not of the *unity*, nor yet of the *divinity*, but of the *individuality* of the three. It falls, therefore, into the same general classification of doctrines.

We find, then, as the result of this analysis, that the various methods of stating the doctrine of the Trinity, and of reasoning upon it, reduce themselves essentially to these three — a modified unity, a modified divinity, a modified individuality.

We are now prepared to proceed with some advantage in the investigation. The question is: Which of these is the right method? Which best elucidates the subject? Which best accords with the general spirit and teaching of the sacred oracles? The field of inquiry contracts itself within these narrow limits. Two simple questions, in fact, cover the whole ground.

I. Is that divinity which the Scriptures ascribe to the Son and the Spirit in any sense limited; or is it absolute and supreme, like that of the Father?

II. Do they represent the Son and Spirit as possessing individuality in the sense of distinct spiritual existence, separate from that of the Father, or only in some limited and secondary sense, such as may consist with strict numerical unity of being in the Godhead?

These questions fairly answered, we can no longer be in doubt as to the proper method of viewing and stating the doctrine of the Trinity.

It will be sufficient for our present purpose to conduct these inquiries with reference simply to the Son, without extending them further, inasmuch as the Scriptures are more full and explicit on this point, and inasmuch, also, as the bearing of such an examination on the subject before us will be equally decisive in the one case as in the other. If the Scriptures teach the supreme and absolute divinity of Christ, then the first of the three methods or theories cannot be correct. If they teach the distinct, separate individuality of the Son, then the last method cannot be the right one.

It is evident, moreover, that these inquiries should be made with reference not to Jesus Christ in his mediatorial character and earthly condition, the God-man, but rather to the Logos, existing with the Father before the world was, in his original and proper nature and condition; since, by the assumption of the mediatorial office, and by his incarnation in order to that, there accrued necessarily to the Son both an individuality and a dependence altogether *human*, and not at all pertaining to his own proper nature, and which therefore ought not to be introduced as elements into any inquiry respecting the mode of the divine existence—a subject which lies infinitely beyond and above these adventitious circumstances. Our inquiries relate not to the divine man of Nazareth, the man Christ Jesus, but to that divine nature which became incarnate in the person of Christ, and which in its pre-existent state sustained certain relations to the Father,—was or was not individually distinct from him,—was or

was not absolutely equal with him in all the attributes of deity.

I. Is that divinity which the Scriptures ascribe to the Son as pre-existent in any sense limited, or is it absolute and equal to that of the Father.

A thorough exposition of the various passages which bear upon this question is of course beyond the limits of a single article. A brief survey is all that can be attempted. For the sake of convenience, we shall arrange the various passages into classes as we proceed.

1. Passages which apply to Christ the unqualified appellation *θεός* or *ὁ θεός*.

These are not decisive in the present inquiry; for, although they imply divine honor in some sense, yet, as it is possible the term may be employed in a secondary or figurative sense, they cannot be appealed to as necessarily denoting absolute and supreme divinity.

2. Passages which ascribe to Christ the work of creation.

1 Cor. viii. 6: "by whom are all things" (*δι' οὗ*); Heb. i. 3: "by whom he made the worlds"; Col. i. 16, 17: "all things were created by him and for him" (*δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν*); "and by him (*ἐν αὐτῷ*) all things consist." This passage is somewhat stronger than the others. Yet not any of them seem decisive as to the question whether full and supreme divinity, like that of the Father, belongs to the Son; for it is certainly not impossible to conceive of the power to create and to govern being *conferred* and exercised *instrumentally* — an idea which the form of expression, genitive with preposition *διά*, seems to indicate.

3. Passages which speak of divine power and honor being conferred on the Son by the Father.



Such are Heb. i. 2: "whom he hath appointed heir of all things," and in the following verses, "sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high,"—i.e. in the place of honor and power next the highest,— "being made so much better than the angels," etc. Also Eph. i. 20: "and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion," etc.; "and hath put all things under his feet," etc. Also 1 Pet. iii. 22: "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him."

These passages, and those of like import, while they ascribe to the Son an eminence and honor peculiarly divine, do, nevertheless, plainly convey the idea of subordination in some sense to a higher power. His seat is *next* that of the majesty on high; the honor and dominion are *conferred* upon him; he is *appointed* to them. These passages would be decisive of the question before us, were it not that they all manifestly refer to Christ in his mediatorial character, the risen, ascended, exalted Redeemer, and not to the pre-existent One, the Logos, such as he was before his incarnation and voluntary humiliation. They cannot, therefore, according to the principle just laid down, be admitted as bearing upon the question before us. The inquiry is not whether the man Christ Jesus, the Saviour upon earth, or the Saviour risen and ascended, is in any sense subordinate to the Father; that is conceded by all; but whether this subordination pertains to his original nature and proper condition, or is only assumed along with the vesture of humanity and the mediatorial office. This is a question which the pas-



sages now under consideration do not meet, and were never designed to meet. They belong to the same class with those which speak of the Father as sending the Son, of the Son as being sent, and as doing the will of him who sent him, of the Father as being greater than the Son, etc., etc.; all which relate to the Messiah *as such*, and have no bearing, therefore, on the present question.

- 4. More to the purpose, though not perhaps altogether conclusive, is a class of passages in which the Son is directly compared with the Father.

In Col. i. 15 he is termed “the *image* of the invisible God.” This is a strong expression, but not decisive; for a child may be said to be the very image of its father, and yet not in all respects his equal. Indeed, the very comparison suggests some sort of inequality; for we compare the less with the greater; we liken him whom we would honor to one whose reputation and dignity are still greater. In the present instance, it is not quite clear that the reference is not to Christ as Mediator, God *manifest* or revealed, in distinction from the “*invisible* God,” or God concealed. The same remark applies to Col. i. 19: “It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell”; and also to Col. ii. 9: “In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” These are strong expressions. They mean that whatever pertains to the Godhead pertains also to Christ. When we compare them, however, with Eph. i. 23, in which the same expression is applied to the church,—“which is his body, the fulness of him who filleth all in all,”—we hesitate to ascribe to them the sense of absolute and supreme divinity. For if the language necessarily implies that

idea in the one case, why not in the other? If the fulness of the Godhead dwelling bodily in Christ constitutes him strictly and in the highest sense a divine being, then why does not the fulness of him who filleth all in all, pertaining as it does to the church, constitute that equally and in the same sense divine?

Other passages there are, however, in which the comparison of the Son with the Father seems to be made with special reference to the Logos as pre-existent; which are therefore more decisive in their bearing upon the present discussion, for example, Phil. ii. 6, where we meet with the following expressions: "who being in the form of God" (*μορφῇ θεοῦ*), and "equal with God" (*ἴσα θεῷ*). If, with the earlier commentators and the Fathers, we regard *μορφή* as synonymous in this connection with *φύσις* and *οὐσία*, the nature and essence of the Deity, the passage becomes conclusive as to the subject of our present inquiry. That the word is thus used by Greek authors there can be no doubt. Whether it is so used in the present instance, or whether it refers to the condition rather than to the nature of Deity, admits, however, of question. As to the latter clause of the verse, whether, with most expositors, ancient and modern, we take it to mean, "did not think it any assumption, or robbing God of his glory, to place himself on a footing and equality with the Father," a sense which both the context and the genius of the language seem to require; or whether, with some critics of note, we interpret the sentence thus: "did not regard equality with the Father as a great prize, a thing to be eagerly coveted;" in either case, this, at least, seems to be implied, that the Son might justly, and without claiming anything more than

his own due, have assumed or retained equality with the Father. And if it be contended that this equality was one not of nature but of condition, — an equality of glory and honor, — still the question arises, Why and whence this equality of condition, if there were not also, lying back of that, and as the ground of it, an equality of nature? Whence the propriety of one who was really inferior to God, sharing in this way the divine honor and glory, and being in this respect equal to Jehovah? On the whole, and whatever interpretation be fairly put upon the words, the passage must be regarded as of very great weight in the present investigation, if not, indeed, conclusive.

Closely related to this is Heb. i. 3: "brightness of his glory, and express image of his person" (*χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως*), to which essentially the same remarks will apply which have been made with respect to the preceding passage. When we remember that *ὑποστάσις* in this connection denotes not *person*, — a sense altogether foreign to the word until the controversy of the fourth century, — but *substance, being*, the relation thus expressed becomes a very intimate one; the Son is the stamp, the very impress (*χαρακτήρ*) of the Father's essence, representing it as the impression represents the seal. Equality of nature and attributes would seem to be implied by such expressions; and if, with the ancient and many modern expositors, we regard the passage as relating to the pre-existent Logos, it is certainly of no little weight as respects the present inquiry; and yet, on the whole, it may be regarded as questionable, to say the least, whether it has such reference.

The class of passages now cited is certainly inconsistent with the Socinian theory, but not necessarily so

with the view of the Nicene Council, that Christ is God of God, Light of Light, deriving his existence eternally from the Father. Nor is it totally inconsistent even with the Arian idea, that he is not merely of derived but of created existence. It is certainly possible to suppose that the Father might impart existence to one who should be constituted the very brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person. Indeed, these are the very passages to which the Nicene fathers constantly appeal in support of their view.

Setting aside, then, those passages which fall under the divisions already named, as somewhat doubtful in their application to the present inquiry, or at least not altogether decisive of the question before us, there still remain two classes of Scripture texts to which these doubts do not pertain.

These are: 1. Those which apply to Christ the term God, in connection with some qualifying phrase which fixes and defines the meaning of the term, ascribing to him either creative power, or supreme dominion, or some other attribute or act of divinity. In such cases it is not the term, the name of Deity, alone, which has weight, nor yet the epithet taken by itself, but the name taken in connection with that epithet or qualifying adjunct.

Such a passage is John i. 1, 3, where the assertion is not simply made that the Logos was God, but the writer goes on to define his meaning, assuring us that he intends by that expression none other than the Creator. The God who made all things is the God of whom he speaks. This can hardly be regarded in any other light than as a clear and full expression of divinity in the highest sense.

Such also is Rom. ix. 5: "the God over all, blessed forever," (ὁ ὢν ἐνὶ πάντων θεός) etc. The criticism which would refer these words to some other than the immediate antecedent ὁ Χριστός, is so manifestly unfair and at variance with the established laws of construction, the *usus loquendi* of the Greek language, as hardly to need comment.<sup>1</sup>

Here also might be classed 1 John v. 20: "This is the true God and eternal life"; were it certain that the pronoun οὗτος refers to the immediate antecedent Χριστός, a construction which, though supported by eminent critics, ancient and modern, must be regarded as doubtful.

The same may be said of Titus ii. 13: "The manifestation of the glory of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." The reference manifestly is to the final judgment, when Christ shall come with clouds, and with great glory; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him. The expressions "great God," and "our Saviour," seem both to belong to Jesus Christ, in this passage, thus denoting one and the same being; and so the passage has been generally understood, both in ancient and modern times. As it is possible however, to refer the former expression to the Father, in distinction from "our Saviour Jesus Christ," — a construction favored by some names of high authority, — it is not necessary to press it into the service of the present argument.

We purposely omit in this connection the passage in Heb. iii. 4: "He that built all things is God," because, while it manifestly refers to Christ, and implies that he as God is the founder of all things, still, as regards

<sup>1</sup> See note (B.) at the end of this Article.



its connection with the context and the writer's design in the words, it is usually, and perhaps justly, regarded as somewhat obscure.

2. We come now to those passages which apply to the Son words directly cited, or expressions plainly borrowed, from the Old Testament, which in their original connection manifestly refer to, and were spoken of, the supreme God.

Thus John xii. 41 applies to Christ the vision of God's glory which Isaiah saw in the temple: "These things spake Esaias," etc. No one can read the passage as it stands in the original connection (Isa. vi.), and question whether it was the glory of the supreme and ever blessed God that the prophet beheld.

Heb. i. 10 applies directly to Christ what in Ps. cii. 24-27 is spoken of the supreme God: "Of old hast thou laid the foundations. . . . They shall perish, but thou shalt endure," etc. The words immediately preceding show still more plainly to whom the psalmist had reference: "I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days; thy years are throughout all generations." The supreme Disposer of life and death and all human events, the eternal and unchangeable One, Creator of all things, is the being addressed in this prayer or song. Yet the Epistle to the Hebrews assures us the language has reference to the Son.

Still more striking is the application to Christ, in Rom. xiv. 11, of a sublime passage (Isa. xlv. 23) in which Jehovah declares that he alone is the proper object of divine worship. In the context, he enters into controversy with the idols of the heathen, and in the most earnest and emphatic manner asserts his own undivided claim to dominion and honor, his alone



Divinity: "I am God; and there is none else. I have sworn by myself . . . . that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." This passage, so lofty and fearful in its import, Paul interprets as referring to the hour of final judgment, and quotes it in proof of the assertion that we are all to stand before the judgment-seat of *Christ*. His inference is, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." It is impossible to read the passage as it stands in Isaiah, and not feel that it is the supreme and eternal God who is making use of this language respecting himself; and equally impossible to read it as quoted by Paul, and resist the impression that, in applying the language to Christ as final Judge, the apostle felt that he was not departing from the spirit and intention of the original.

In Rev. i. 17 Christ styles himself "the first and the last," an expression which, if it be not borrowed from, is strongly suggestive of, Isa. xlv. 6: "I am the first and the last; and beside me there is no God." The expression as it stands in the prophecy is designed to convey a very strong assertion of absolute and supreme divinity, and the simple application of the expression to Christ as an epithet of honor and dignity, whether it be intentionally borrowed, or not, from the language of Jehovah, in Isaiah, is of itself decisive of the question before us.

The same is true of a kindred expression, "Lord of lords," frequently applied to Jehovah in the Old Testament, as, for example, Deut. x. 17, and in the New Testament not infrequently used with reference to Christ, as, for example, Rev. xvii. 14 and xix. 16 and 1 Tim. vi. 15.

The spirit and purport of these passages and expressions, as they stand in the Old Testament scriptures, is such as greatly to strengthen the argument derived from the use which is made of them in the New. They protest against, and utterly forbid, the paying divine honor to any but the true God. As regards several of them, particularly Isa. xlv. 23 and xlv. 6, this is their special design and import—a design which could in *no way be more directly and palpably violated* than by the application of these words to Christ, if he be not truly and in the highest sense *God*. They are the very last passages in all the Old Testament scriptures to admit of such an application.

In fine (not to pursue further the examination of this part of the subject), when one meets in the New Testament such terms as the following, used in speaking of the Son,—the God who made all things; the God over all, blessed forever; the great God our Saviour; the true God; the Lord of glory; the Lord of lords and King of kings; the First and the Last; the God whose glory Isaiah saw in vision when it filled and shook the temple; the God before whom we must all stand in judgment, and to whom every knee shall bow and every tongue confess,—what shall he infer but that Christ is, as regards his proper and higher nature, *very God*? What expressions can convey to the human mind more fully than these the idea of absolute divinity?

As regards the testimony of the Scriptures, then, respecting the question now under consideration, we are led to the conclusion, which seems inevitable, that they do not teach the divinity of the Son in any modified or secondary, but in the absolute, unqualified, and strict, sense; and that, therefore, the theory which is

based upon a virtual limitation of that divinity cannot be the true and correct one.

We come now to the second of the two questions into which the subject divides itself; and on this point our examination must necessarily be brief.

II. Do the Scriptures represent the Son as possessing individuality, in the sense of distinct spiritual existence, separate from that of the Father; or only in some modified and secondary sense, such as may consist with strict numerical unity of essence or being in the Godhead?

And here, as before, it must be borne in mind as we proceed, that the inquiry relates to the pre-existent Christ—the Logos,—and not to the Messiah—the divine and human nature united in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, inasmuch as the latter possessed an individuality peculiar to himself, which does not necessarily pertain to the divine nature of the Son in its original and proper state, and which is therefore altogether foreign to any inquiry respecting the mode of the divine existence in itself considered.

Keeping in mind this distinction, and proceeding upon it, we shall find the passages to be very few which have any proper bearing upon the question before us. The following are the chief, if not, in fact, the only ones, which can be considered as in point.

Jno. i. 1, 2: "The word was with God. . . . . The same was in the beginning with God"; Heb. i. 2: "By whom he made the worlds"; Phil. ii. 5: "Who being in the form of God," etc.; Jno. xvii. 5, 24: "The glory that I had with thee before the world was. . . . . For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

These expressions certainly seem to imply a distinction of being. They bear upon the face of them that aspect. They convey the idea of separate existence, — of a mind acting for itself, — of a being possessing consciousness, will, affections, — the object of the Father's love and the participator of his glory. This, it must be conceded, is the first impression one would naturally derive from the words before us. Did these passages stand alone, there would be no reason, perhaps, to call in question the correctness of that first impression; it is only when we compare them with other passages, and with the general teaching of the sacred Scriptures, that we hesitate to attach to them such a sense. The doctrine of the divine unity — of the one, simple, undivided essence, one in the strict and absolute sense, numerically one — is too plainly taught in the Scriptures, too positively and earnestly set forth, to be called in question by any one who receives these writings as authoritative in matters of faith. But to attach to the passages now under consideration the sense proposed, is to come directly into conflict with this cardinal truth. If the Son in his original nature be properly and truly divine, and at the same time possesses a distinct and proper individuality, a separate existence from that of the Father, then it is no longer true that there is *one* only living and true God. There are *two*. And no acuteness of reasoning and metaphysical distinction can make it otherwise, and no evasion of the real points at issue can conceal the fact. We may call it mystery; but still it remains a palpable, obvious contradiction.

We must go back, then, and examine the premises more carefully. Do these passages teach the distinct



and proper individuality of the Logos, in the sense now intended? Do they ascribe to him an existence separate from that of the Father, a being of his own, a mind endowed with the various faculties that pertain to mental existence, such as consciousness, affections, will, etc., in distinction from the mind, affections, will, etc., of the Father? In a word, is the literal construction of these expressions the true and proper one, or are we to regard them as tropical, in some sense, and used by way of adaptation to our conceptions and modes of thought and speech?

Certain it is that, in order to express the idea of a distinction in the divine nature, we are under the necessity of employing expressions like these. Such is the poverty of human language and of human thought, that we can in no other way approach themes so far above us than by appropriating to them expressions borrowed from material objects and the range of human observation. On the supposition, then, that the Son has not originally a proper individuality, a distinct being and existence, but that the divine essence is strictly one and undivided, still it would be natural, almost inevitable, indeed, that the sacred writers should speak as they do in the passages under consideration. On the contrary, if the Son in his pre-existent state has a distinct existence, a proper individuality, separate from that of the Father, and if the Spirit is individually distinct from both, — if, in other words, Father, Son, and Spirit are three distinct divine minds, — nothing could be easier than to express that idea plainly and positively in the language which men ordinarily employ. This, certainly, the Scriptures have not done. Where, unless in the passages under consideration, is any such

idea conveyed? That it is not necessarily and positively conveyed in these passages is plain, since, as we have just observed, the language is precisely such as would naturally be employed on the supposition that simply a distinction existing in the nature of the Godhead, and not separate individuality in the strict and proper sense, had been intended.

When Christ speaks of the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, and of the Father as having then loved him, are we necessarily to understand him as implying anything more than a participation in the divine nature and dignity in that pre-existent state? Is it not the God-man, Christ Jesus, addressing the Father, and speaking of himself as he was before he assumed humanity? And how else in human language could he speak of himself, as he was in that former state, except in the way he does, as if possessing individual existence?

And when John speaks of the word as *with* God, is it not under the same restriction and necessity of speech—an approximation, such as human language and the human mind will admit of, to that which in all its length and breadth lies far above our reach and comprehension? Is there not, in all these cases, present to the mind of the writer or speaker the proper individuality of Jesus, as he existed among men, serving as the basis and ground-work of the language used to denote that higher and pre-existent state—the *starting-point* from which the mind sets out? And if so, will not this account for the nature of the expressions and illustrations employed?

In fine, whatever view we take of these expressions, when we come to place them beside and weigh them



against the numerous passages in which the unity of God is stated in the most positive terms, the latter certainly preponderate. If we follow the guidance of Scripture, we are to conceive of God as *one*—*one being* or existence—*one mind*, creating, directing, controlling all things; possessing the faculties and attributes essential to all mental or spiritual existence, as consciousness, understanding, will, affections, etc. We cannot modify this idea of the divine unity in any essential point without departing from the track of revelation. The moment we conceive of the Deity as consisting of three distinct individuals, each possessing consciousness, affections, will, of his own, we contradict and virtually abandon the true scriptural simple idea of *one God*. Whatever guard we may throw about our language, we do, in fact, from that moment, believe not in *one* God, but in *three*. It is plain, then, that we must either adopt a modified view of the divine unity, abandoning the strict and proper sense of the term, and suffering the different divine persons—Father, Son, and Spirit—to be one in no other sense than as Peter, John, and James are one, i.e. specifically so,—one in disposition, purpose, heart, aim, nature; or else we must modify our idea of the individuality of the Son and Spirit so as not to conceive of them as separate existences or beings—separate minds, thinking, devising, willing, etc., in distinction from the one divine mind. Our choice is between the two—either *this* or *tritheism*. *This*, and *not tritheism*, we are compelled to say; for such is the decision at once of revelation and of reason.

Do we then, in so saying, reject the *personality* of the Son and of the Spirit? By no means. In the

true sense of that word as used with reference to the Deity, in the only sense in which the word ought ever to be used in such connection, we do not reject it. In every other sense we do. As denoting a distinction existing eternally in the divine nature—a distinction not understood or capable of being comprehended fully by us, mysterious to us, as are many other things respecting Deity—a distinction, however, which lays the foundation for a development in the history of our world of God as Father, as Son, and as Spirit,—in this sense the term personality may be employed conveniently, in place and for want of some better term. And this is all that the Scriptures seem, on the whole, to convey respecting the matter, and all that we can admit, consistently with the cardinal doctrine of the divine unity of essence or being.<sup>1</sup>

That many Trinitarians, ancient and modern, go further than this, is to be conceded. They use the word person in reference to the Deity in a much broader sense, meaning by it much the same thing as when they apply it to three different men. That such writers are, in reality, not so much trinitarians as tritheists, is also to be conceded. For what *can* constitute *three Gods*, if three Divine existences, each possessing strict and proper individuality,—three Divine minds, each acting, feeling, willing, of itself,—are not? What is personality, in the ordinary and strict sense, more than this? In what sense, other than this, are any three men three persons?<sup>2</sup>

This method of stating the doctrine of the Trinity is particularly unfortunate, since it not only leads the

<sup>1</sup> See note (C.) at the end of this Article.

<sup>2</sup> See note (D.) at the end of this Article.

mind that adopts it into unnecessary confusion, and even error, but, by coming into direct and unavoidable collision with one of the plainest truths of revelation, the divine unity, it brings the doctrine itself into disrepute, and in many instances occasions its entire rejection. It is a sad fact, yet one with which he who is conversant with the history of doctrines in the church is but too familiar, that in many cases the first sources of the error and essential heresy which have arisen in the world, to the no small detriment of truth and the human mind, are to be found in the injudicious and unreasonable statements and opinions of those who have held the very opposite extreme. Thus, unquestionably, has it been in the present instance. Not a few have been led to reject the divinity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity in toto, as the only way of avoiding the really irreconcilable contradictions involved in the method of statement now under consideration. And this state of things must continue so long as they who hold the doctrine allow themselves to use terms in this loose and incorrect manner ; applying to the distinctions in the divine nature the term person, in nearly or quite the ordinary sense of the word ; speaking and thinking of the Father, Son, and Spirit as if they were three distinct beings, who together constitute the Deity, who consult together, and enjoy each other's society and converse ; thus virtually abandoning the doctrine of the simple, undivided unity of the Godhead, and, when pressed with the conflicting nature of these two things, taking refuge as a last resort behind the broad shield of acknowledged mystery.

A leading New England divine, not long deceased, and whose writings are destined to exert for years

to come no inconsiderable influence upon theological science, thus discourses upon the mode of the divine existence: "We find no difficulty in conceiving of three divine persons. It is just as easy to conceive of three divine persons as of three human persons. . . . The only difficulty in this case lies in conceiving these *three* persons to be but *one*."<sup>1</sup> The same sentiment frequently recurs. "We have as clear an idea of these three divine persons as of three human persons. There is no mystery in the personality of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, though there is a profound mystery in their being one God."<sup>2</sup>

Using the term personality in this sense, conceiving of the three divine persons as we do of three human persons, we are quite ready to admit, with the author, that there is both a difficulty and a profound mystery, nay, we should certainly add, an utter impossibility, in conceiving of these three as one being.

It does not remove the difficulty to say that "being may signify something different from person in respect to deity," and therefore "we may easily conceive that God should be but one being, and yet exist in three persons." For being and person signify different things as respects *man* also; yet it is not easy to conceive of three human persons constituting one human being. Nor is it any advance towards the removal of this difficulty to say, what is doubtless true, that "the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three in respect to their personality, and but one in respect to their nature and essence."<sup>3</sup> Personality is here supposed to be something *distinct* from nature and essence, so that

<sup>1</sup> Emmons's Works, Vol. iv. p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Vol. iv. p. 125.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Vol. iv. p. 110.

what pertains to the one does not pertain to the other. Very true. But the personality of the Father, Son, and Spirit, according to the author, consists in this: that each "is able to understand, to will, and to act of himself," and to do so "as a free, voluntary, almighty agent."<sup>1</sup> But do not understanding, will, and free voluntary action pertain, we ask, to the *very nature and essence* of deity? Can we conceive of Deity as essentially and in his original nature destitute of these properties? If not, then, as personality consists in these things, what becomes of the distinction just made, and how is it that a threefold personality, in this human sense, does not also involve a threefold nature and essence?

Indeed, the author in a subsequent passage virtually admits that this explanation is unsatisfactory: "It is as easy," he repeats, "to conceive of three divine persons as to conceive of one divine person. The only difficulty is to conceive how three divine persons should be but one divine being. But this is the mystery of the doctrine, which it is neither possible nor necessary for us to understand."<sup>2</sup> If it is neither *possible* nor *necessary* for us to conceive how these three persons can be one being,—and we are perfectly ready to admit that it is even so, in the sense now attached to the word person,—then what avails any explanation, or any attempt to explain? And what, moreover, becomes of the assertion that "we *can* easily conceive that God should be but one being, and yet exist in three persons."

If the doctrine of the divine unity be not essentially swept away and abandoned by these and the like

<sup>1</sup> Emmons's Works, Vol. iv. pp. 107, 108.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Vol. iv. p. 130.



representations, then we are at a loss to conceive what idea can be attached in any man's mind to that word "unity." It is replied: The Scriptures nowhere teach that the unity of God is just like *our* unity. True. But what, we ask again, is the proper and primitive meaning of that word "unity?" Are there several kinds of unity, as there are several shades of a color, or several races of men? Strictly speaking, is there any other unity but *numerical* unity? And when we think of a thing as being one, or as more than one, is not this one of the simplest ideas that the human mind can form — one of its elementary conceptions? Is it not evident that when we speak of three or more personal, individual, distinct agents, each willing and acting for himself, as being one, we use the term in a secondary, and not in its proper and primitive, sense? We mean they are one in sentiment, one in heart, one in purpose and action, etc. In this sense any three men, or any number of men, may be one. And is the glorious, the cardinal doctrine of the divine unity reduced to this — a mere figurative oneness, a specific unity, merely? In this sense, one may ask, why were not the gods of heathen mythology one, partaking, as they were supposed to do, of the same nature, the same spirit, and the same attributes? When we read that the Lord our God is one Lord, when we hear Jehovah assert in the plainest manner his undivided unity of existence and dominion against the multiplicity of heathen and false gods, when we read that "God is one," that "there is one God and Father of all," "the King eternal," "the only wise God," is there, we ask, in all this no assertion of simple, strict, and proper unity as respects the being to whom these solemn and



repeated asseverations refer? What language could more explicitly have affirmed such an idea, supposing this to have been intended?

It devolves on those who conceive of the three divine, as they do of three human, persons, not merely to admit that it is a mysterious thing how these three are one being, but to show that in any intelligible sense, or any proper use of terms, they *can* be one; that three conscious, intelligent, voluntary agents, thinking, feeling, willing, acting, each for himself, distinct from each other, do, or can, in any proper sense, constitute *one being*; and that when the Scriptures speak of God as one, they mean only such unity as this. This is more than can be shown.

Accordingly, we find that those who take this view usually place the doctrine of the divine unity quite in the back-ground. It has ceased to mean much or to be of much importance. The distinguished divine, from whom we have just quoted, sums up his argument respecting the personal distinction in the Godhead, with this remark: "We know, therefore, that they are three distinct persons. Their personality is plainly and intelligibly revealed; *though their unity is not and cannot be revealed*. . . . . All that we can know, or need to know, about the mysterious mode of the divine existence, is the proper personality of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and not their unity."<sup>1</sup> This is bold language, surely. We do not understand the writer, however, to assert, as the words might seem to imply, that the divine unity is not a matter of revelation, but only that it is a doctrine which we are not capable of

<sup>1</sup> Emmons's Works, Vol. iv. p. 121.

understanding; and in this we fully concur, provided we are shut up to his idea of divine personality.

The view now under consideration has led those who adopt it to a method of speaking of the sacred Trinity which seems to us altogether objectionable. They are accustomed to represent the divine persons as consulting together, forming plans, and enjoying mutual intercourse and companionship. "Society," says the writer to whom we have already referred, "is the source of the highest felicity. And that society affords the greatest enjoyment which is composed of persons of the same character, of the same disposition, of the same designs, of the same pursuits. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who are three equally divine persons in the one living and true God, are perfectly united in all these respects; and therefore God's existing a trinity in unity necessarily renders him the all-sufficient source of his own most perfect felicity. We cannot conceive of any other mode of existence so absolutely perfect and blessed."<sup>1</sup>

We ask, now, whether there be not in all this the essential element of *tritheism*. We put it to every candid and intelligent mind, whether, if the doctrine of divine unity were altogether stricken out of the Bible, and in place of it stood the revelation of three gods, it would be possible to speak of the society and companionship mutually enjoyed by the three, in terms plainer, more direct, and appropriate, than the above.

This is language by no means peculiar to one author or one school of divines. We find it not in the lectures of theologians and the pages of controversial writers, merely, but not unfrequently even in those

<sup>1</sup> Emmons's Works, Vol. iv. p. 115.

elementary treatises designed to convey the first ideas of sacred truth to the mind of childhood. What other impression can be left upon the mind of the child, or of the simple-hearted adult, by such representations, than that these three persons of the Godhead are very much like any other three persons, better pleased with each other's society and converse than with solitude; and when he comes afterward to learn that nevertheless God is *one being*, is he not fully prepared to perceive in this simplest of all ideas which man can possibly form of the Deity a mystery which he can never expect to understand or explain.

And what is the authority for all this? Do the Scriptures thus speak of God? If they do, we will no further object. But how is this? Where do we read of three divine persons as thus conversing together and enjoying each other's society? Where do we read of the Father's consulting with the Son respecting the work of redemption? "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." "Then said I, Lo I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God." Does this language refer to the distinction originally and eternally existing in the divine nature, the true and proper trinity of the Godhead, or is it not rather and most manifestly spoken with reference to the incarnate Word, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth? And when from the opening heavens a voice proclaims, at the baptism of Jesus, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," are we to infer from this that the same distinction of personality in the human sense always existed between the two as at that moment, and that there was from eternity the same occasion for such language to be addressed by one to the other?

When shall we come to remember that the language of the sacred writers respecting Christ the Messiah, the God-man, does not necessarily apply, and cannot fairly be made to refer, to the primitive and original nature of the Divine Being, as he existed from eternity, prior to all manifestations of himself in time? Indeed, are not the very terms, Father, Son, and Spirit, terms borrowed from, and having special reference to, the economy of grace and of man's redemption? Do they not derive their special significance and force, as terms, from the manifestation of God in Christ our Saviour to redeem lost man, and the operation of God in his Spirit to sanctify and renew him? Are the terms Father, Son, and Spirit ever employed, in fact, by the sacred writers to denote *that original distinction existing in the divine nature from eternity*, which constitutes *the foundation* for this personal development, and with which alone we are concerned in treating of the mode of the divine existence? That such a distinction in the divine nature exists, and has existed from eternity, the foundation of whatever developments or manifestations of himself the Deity has made in time and to our race — this we believe to be the doctrine of the Scriptures. But is it to this original distinction in the nature of the Godhead that the terms Father, Son, and Spirit apply as used in the Scriptures? Is the term Father applied to the Deity, in the sense now intended, as denoting the first of a trinity of persons, *prior to and irrespective of the incarnation*? Is the term Son, in a similar sense, applied to the Deity *prior, and without prospective reference, to that wonderful event, the coming among men of one who was in the beginning with God, and who was God*?

Are the terms Logos and Son used *indiscriminately* in the sacred writings, and without distinction of meaning? Is the term Holy Spirit in like manner used to designate the Divine Being, as he is in himself and from eternity, prior to, and independent of, all operation and influence of that Being upon the hearts of men? These positions are almost universally assumed, but certainly without authority from the Scriptures. If this be so, — if these terms, as used in the sacred writings, refer not to the original nature of the Godhead, but to the Deity as he stands related to the economy of man's redemption, — then what becomes of the theory now under discussion? And where is any man's authority for this whole matter and method of representing the one God of the Scriptures as existing from eternity in a distinct and complete threefold personality like that of three men, and enjoying that society, converse, and companionship which would result from such a relation? Such a view we believe to be at once inconsistent with the teachings of Scripture, and at war with reason, which is utterly unable to reconcile this statement with the acknowledged and proper unity of the Divine Being.

But in this we are digressing from the main purpose of our inquiry.

What, then, is the result of the present investigation? What shall we conclude to be the true doctrine respecting this subject? Evidently this. While the Scriptures teach the absolute and supreme divinity of the Son, they also in the plainest and most positive terms teach the absolute unity of God. While, therefore, we are not at liberty to put such a construction on passages which indicate a certain distinction in the divine nature



as will in any way conflict with this idea of God as one simple, undivided essence or being, we must still allow a distinction to exist, and to be eternal, and to constitute the foundation of that development which the Deity has been pleased to make of himself, in revelation and in the economy of grace, as Father, Son, and Spirit.

Whatever justice or injustice there may be in the charge of Sabellianism very generally brought against Dr. Bushnell,<sup>1</sup> whatever differences there may be between his theory and the Patri-Passian or Sabellian system, in these respects, at least, they would seem to agree, that the Trinity, or distinction of persons, has its source not in the nature of God, but rather in the wants and necessities of man, and that it is therefore not an eternal distinction, but one which is temporal and finite. It is an instrumental arrangement, a vehicle or mode of thought, a revelation of the otherwise unknown and unknowable God.

There may be, and doubtless is, a sense, and an important one, in which this, or something like this, is true. If by impersonation, or trinity of persons, be meant the actual manifestation of God to man under the forms of the incarnate Logos and the Holy Spirit, — the former redeeming, the latter sanctifying, the human soul, — then it is indeed a thing which *begins*, which has relation to time, and which finds its explanation in the exigency of human wants. But if, as we suppose, it be meant that *prior to this manifestation, and from eternity, there did not exist in the divine nature itself the foundation for just this development*, or that this foundation did not amount to a *real distinction* in the divine nature, partaking of the character of per-

<sup>1</sup>God in Christ. By Horace Bushnell. Hartford.



sonality, then, as we must think, there lies couched under these forms of expression an error not inconsiderable or unimportant.

But Dr. Bushnell describes the Logos as *the faculty of self-expression in the Deity*. We are ready to ask, then, must not this faculty have existed eternally, and have pertained to the very nature of the Deity? Has the immutable one a faculty to-day which he had not yesterday, and for which until now there was no foundation in his nature? If, in like manner, we suppose the term Holy Spirit to denote the divine faculty of operation on the human mind and heart, must not this also have existed eternally in the Deity, a faculty pertaining to his very nature? And are not these two faculties distinct one from the other? Have we not, then, after all, an eternal distinction existing in the divine nature itself, as the ground and foundation of those impersonations of the Deity which take place in time?

To this distinction we may, for convenience, apply the term *hypostasis*, subsistence, or person, if we please, provided we allow neither ourselves nor others to forget that when thus employed the word is taken out of its ordinary sense, and used in a manner, and for a purpose, altogether extraordinary. Here is trinity—trinity in unity. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are God; and these three are one God. This we believe to be the doctrine of the Scriptures. That it is also the Calvinistic doctrine is unquestionable, though a matter of infinitely less importance.

The doctrine of the Trinity, correctly viewed, whatever difficulties it may present to the human mind,

does not appear fairly liable to the objections which are frequently urged against it.

It is sometimes pronounced an *incomprehensible doctrine*.

Shall we ask a man to believe what he cannot comprehend? By no means. Neither can we allow him to object to it, much less pronounce it untrue. He is in all modesty and propriety shut up to the necessity of being silent; since, in order to be sure of the truth or falsity of any doctrine or statement, one must comprehend it. How else can he know whether it be true or false?

But we protest against the assumption that this doctrine is incomprehensible. Something pertaining to the subject there may be, there undoubtedly is, which we do not comprehend. But what is it? Not the fact, which the Scriptures assert, that God exists, and operates in the economy of grace, as Father, as Son, and as Spirit, and that these three are one God. This is certainly a plain statement, and any intelligent man can understand what it means. The *nature* of this distinction in the divine being, the *modus* of it, we do not understand; it has never been revealed to us; and therefore respecting this we affirm nothing. Shall we therefore reject the *fact* that such a distinction exists, and is matter of revelation? Is this the only thing respecting the Deity which we find ourselves unable to comprehend? How is it as to his self-existence? We admit the fact. Can we tell how a being can be the author of his own existence? God is eternal. Are we sure that we quite comprehend what is meant by this? He is omnipresent. Can we exactly understand *how* one and the same being can

be in all parts of the universe at one and the same instant? When we read that the Word became flesh and dwelt among men, and they beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, we read of an event which is in itself a sublime mystery, yet on which all our hopes of eternal life are based. How little do we in fact know of God! Can we find out the Almighty to perfection? Or shall we set aside the plain revelations which he has made of himself, the facts which we do know, because there are other things which we do not know? No truth-loving mind will do this. We believe that God exists, but we do not know *how*; that he is self-existent, but it is a mystery we cannot explain; that he is eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, we also believe; yet here again our philosophy fails us. On precisely the same evidence we believe that the one God exists and manifests himself to man as Father, Son, and Spirit, and that the foundation of this distinction exists in the divine nature; while at the same time the *modus* of this existence and manifestation — the exact nature of this distinction — we do not profess to understand. The simple fact we can comprehend and we do believe.

It is sometimes objected to the doctrine of the Trinity, that it is *contrary to reason*.

That statements may be made respecting this subject which shall involve contradiction and absurdity, we readily admit. That such statements have been made, and that not unfrequently, we cannot deny. For such statements neither the doctrine nor the advocates of it are responsible, but only the authors of them. We are not called upon to defend all the views which

even good and wise and learned men have entertained respecting this matter. That the doctrine of the Trinity in its true form and statement involves anything contradictory or unreasonable, is more than can be shown. What is it that we assert? Not that God is one being, and yet three beings; not that he has simple unity of essence, and at the same time a threefold proper individuality — that the Father, Son, and Spirit are three persons in the sense in which Peter, James, and John are three, and yet are all one being; not this, nor anything resembling this; but simply that there is in the divine nature a threefold distinction, mysterious to us, yet evidently revealed as existing, out of which arises a threefold manifestation to man of God, as Father, as Son, and as Spirit; in all, one and the same being; in all, one God. When to designate this distinction we apply to it the term personality, we do not mean by that term to imply that the distinction is such as exists between different individuals of the human family, nor to institute any comparison between the two cases. We do not affirm that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are individually distinct, as three men or three angels are distinct, each possessing consciousness, will, affections, of his own. This were to deny the proper unity of God, as we admit. We do not regard the word person, or hypostasis, or any other word, as capable of expressing exactly the nature of this threefold relation. We are not sure, indeed, that these are the *best* words which could have been selected. But some word we must use, if we speak at all of these matters; and, with this explanation, we challenge any man to point out the inconsistency or absurdity or unreasonableness of the statement we have made respect-



ing the divine existence. What is there in reason to contradict the fact that such a distinction in the divine nature as that we have spoken of may and does exist? What is there inconsistent or absurd in the idea? What is there in it which the Scriptures do not plainly reveal?

It has sometimes been objected to the doctrine of the Trinity, that it is theoretical rather than practical, matter of conjecture and speculation, which, whether it be true or false, is of little consequence to mankind.

Nothing can be further from the truth than this view of the subject. As regards the substance of the doctrine, it is not a matter of speculation or theory, but a simple matter of fact, given on the authority of God's word, than which there can be no better authority for any statement. As regards our explanations of the matter, our views and opinions respecting it, there is, indeed, wide field for conjecture and theory. The same is true, however, of all the explanations and views which men adopt of revealed truth. These opinions, views, explanations of ours may be right or wrong. The doctrines themselves stand upon a different basis, and, whatever becomes of our methods and views and peculiar philosophy, remain unshaken, because they are revealed truth. So it is in the present instance. We may speculate and theorize as we please respecting the mode of the divine existence; but the doctrine of a triune God is neither a speculation nor a theory, but a revelation from above. Nor is it true that the doctrine under consideration is in its nature and tendencies speculative rather than practical, belonging to the creed and the catechism and the theological school, rather than to the earnest heart and life of the





Scriptures present, how wide the contrast! It is as when one emerges from the gloom and deadly chill of the deep forest or cavern into the cheerful sunlight. We open the sacred writings, and find the Deity revealed to us as Father, as Son, and as Holy Spirit, one God. Behold here the foundation of all our hopes, provision for all our necessities. Behold here a link connecting us sinners with heaven and the ever-blessed Deity and eternal life. In God the Father we find the source and end and object of our being. In God the Son we find the way and the truth and the life, by whom we may reach this great and glorious end of our existence. In God the Spirit we find the guide whom we need to conduct us thither.

"I am he that was, he that is, and he that shall be; and no one hath ever unfolded my veil." Such was the striking and deeply significant inscription on an ancient heathen temple. Every one feels that it was appropriate to the place, and full of truth as regards the pagan worshipper, who knew or dreamed that there was a God, eternal, the beginning and the end of all things, but to whose darkened mind that God had seen fit to make no higher revelation of himself. But with us it is far otherwise. As we approach the Christian temple, the sacred edifice of truth, in whose outer courts man in his earthly being is permitted to worship, we do behold the mysterious veil in part withdrawn; some unseen hand hath rent it; and through its opening folds the eye is permitted to rest upon something of the glory that surrounds the inner presence and fills the holy of holies. The sublimest things, the most sacred, appear revealed to the earnest eye, indistinctly seen, indeed, and in part, and yet really. We

seem, as we gaze upon the sacred mysteries, to behold the moving of a sublime and mighty spectacle — one who was in the beginning with God, and was God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, him at whose word the pillars of creation rose and stood in their appointed places, laying aside the glory that he had with the Father, assuming the form of a servant, the vesture of humanity, and dwelling among men. We behold his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. The veil has indeed risen, and Deity stands before us, God manifest in the flesh. We hear him say: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." "For this purpose came I into the world." "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." We hear him speak also of one whom the Father will send in his name, who shall comfort his people, and sanctify them, and "guide them into all truth."

Again we look, and we behold this same incarnate Word, arrayed in a more glorious form, seated on the right hand of the majesty on high, and ever living to make intercession for us. This veil, to the eye of reason impenetrable, is it not indeed lifted? Comes not the Deity very near to man in this manifestation? This doctrine of a triune God, is it not indeed a most practical as well as sublime doctrine, linked with all our hopes, the avenue of our most direct approach to the eternal and invisible One?

Into this doctrine the Christian disciple has been solemnly baptized. When brought in early childhood to the altar of parental faithfulness, or when in maturer

years subscribing with his own hand to the God of Israel, this sacred name of the Triune was pronounced upon him, as the seal of the sacred ordinance, the signet of the great king, touched his brow. To that holy name, to that blessed truth, the whole church of God on earth is consecrate. Let us, as an old divine hath said, "walk up and down the earth with this impression ever fixed upon us, that we belong to the triune God." Let us ever think of the mystery of the Divine Being with feelings of deepest reverence and awe; conscious that we know little, thankful that so much has been graciously revealed.

## NOTES.

## NOTE A. — Page 303.

The following passages sufficiently indicate what were the views of Calvin as to this point.

"But they deceive themselves in dreaming of three separate individuals, each of them possessing a part of the divine essence. . . . They even foolishly suppose that our opinion implies a quaternity; whereas they are guilty of falsehood and calumny in ascribing to us a judgment of their own; as though we pretended that the three persons are so many streams proceeding from one essence; when it is evident from our writings that we separate not the persons from the essence, but, though they subsist in it, make a distinction between them. If the persons were separated from the essence, there would perhaps be some probability in their argument; but then there would be a trinity of Gods, not a trinity of persons contained in one God.

"Therefore let such as love sobriety, and will be contented with the measure of faith, briefly attend to what is useful to be known; which is that when we profess to believe in one God, the word 'God' denotes a single and simple essence, in which we comprehend three persons or hypostases.

"Wherefore let us not imagine such a trinity of persons as includes an idea of separation or does not immediately recall us to the unity. The names of Father, Son, and Spirit certainly imply a real distinction. Let no one suppose them to be mere epithets by which God is variously designated from his works; but it is a *distinction*, not a *division*."

How much importance Calvin attached to the use and retention of the word "person" in connection with this doctrine, is evident from the following truly noble sentiment: "*Utinam sepulta essent nomina, constaret modo hæc inter omnes fides, patrem et filium et spiritum sanctum esse unum deum!*"

## NOTE B.—Page 313.

Every attempt has been made to set aside the force of this passage and destroy its authority, but in vain. It is undoubtedly genuine, being found in all the MSS. and ancient versions; nor is there the least authority for any change of reading or of punctuation, so as to substitute a different meaning. Beyond all question the true and supreme God is here intended; since of no other can it be said that he is *over all* or *supreme*, and of no other that he is God blessed forever,—an expression never applied to any but the supreme Deity. The attempt of Socinian writers to set aside the force of this passage by construing it into a doxology, placing a period after πάντων, so that the latter clause becomes an independent sentence (“God be blessed forever”), is not only without authority, nearly all the MSS. and ancient versions giving the passage as we have it, but is in conflict at once with the course of thought, which neither requires nor admits a doxology in this connection, and also with Greek usage, which never constructs a doxology after this fashion. In doxology the adjective comes first, and the noun has the article (εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεός), as, for example, Eph. i. 3; 2 Cor. i. 3.

## NOTE C.—Page 322.

I am by no means insensible of the difficulties which press upon the view now taken. On a subject of this nature difficulties attend any theory which we may form. We cannot hope to escape them. Look at the matter from what point of view we will, much remains unexplained and inexplicable. To the position maintained in the present article there are objections of which it is impossible not to admit the force. That the view from which it dissents is open to fewer or less weighty objections I am not prepared to admit.

It may be objected that the view here maintained—that of a modified personality—requires our assent to that which is confessedly and wholly inconceivable. We can conceive of the relation of two or more beings to each other, it may be said; but we can form no conception of an ontological distinction in one and the same mind that shall be analogous to, and furnish foundation for, the use of the terms, I, thou, he. This is true. We cannot conceive, or, more properly, we cannot comprehend, this distinction. And yet it may exist. There is much about the divine nature and



perfections that to us is, and must ever remain, incomprehensible. We cannot expect to comprehend the whole nature of Deity. We cannot represent to ourselves in thought the distinction in question; but neither can we represent to ourselves in thought the *existence without beginning* of the God whom we worship. We do not know in what this distinction consists of which we speak; but neither do we know in what the divine essence consists, nor in what respects it differs from other essences. This, however, is no argument against the divine existence, nor against his existence in the manner now supposed. Is it any more conceivable to suppose three distinct minds in one essence? or the powers and faculties of three minds united in one being? or how three distinct beings can in any proper sense of the word be one being? Those who hold either of these theories ought surely not to object to any other theory that it is inconceivable.

True, we ought not to multiply mystery unnecessarily. The simplest theory is the best, provided it meet and consist with the facts of the case. But in the present instance the theories which are simplest, and most readily conceivable, *do not* consist with the facts of the case. That is precisely the difficulty with them. Nothing is simpler than to conceive of three distinct individuals, or of the Logos as a being unequal with the Father, and whose existence is derived and not eternal; but neither of these theories consists, or can be made to consist, with the great essential facts of the case, the true and proper unity of God, the true and proper divinity of the Logos.

It may be further objected that if the Divine Being is strictly and numerically one, then either the whole divine being becomes incarnate in Christ, or else that one divine being or divine essence becomes divided. If the former, then how is it that Christ speaks of the Father as *sending* him, and of himself as doing the will of the Father? And how is it that he prays to the Father as a distinct being from himself? If the latter, then are we not driven to conceive of the one divine mind divided now into two, each having its own separate existence; the one in heaven as supreme Deity; the other on earth as Redeemer?

I reply: The view which we maintain supposes such a distinction eternally existing in the divine nature as admits of the manifestation in time of the Logos or Word; not the whole divine essence or



divine mind becoming incarnate in the person of Christ, but only the second distinction or hypostasis, the Logos. *How* this could be, of course, we know not. Great is the mystery of this godliness manifest in the flesh; and any theory which should render the sublime fact of the incarnation less a mystery would be in that very respect suspicious. It is rather an argument in favor of the theory above maintained, than against it, that it makes no attempt at such explanation.

And even if it were not so, is the difficulty now urged at all diminished if, instead of this, we adopt some other theory? Suppose, for example, we take the theory of three distinct minds co-existing in one essence. When one of these minds becomes incarnate, the others remaining as before, is not the one essence thus divided? Or take the theory of one mind with three distinct consciousnesses, sensibilities, and wills; one of which sets of mental attributes becomes incarnate, the others not. Is there not here again, the very same difficulty as before — a division of this one mind or essence? To say nothing of the fact that it is inconceivable, not to say impossible, that one mind should possess the faculties of three minds, it is a supposition which when made relieves the difficulty not one whit, but is open to the very same objection.

NOTE D. — Page 822.

It may be thought by some that the argument in this article against the theory of three divine minds in one Divine Being, and the theory that there are three divine intellects, three divine consciousnesses, sensitivities, and wills, in one Divine Being, is inconclusive; inasmuch as it does not recognize the metaphysical distinction, often employed by the advocates of these theories, between *essence or substance or substratum*, and *attributes or properties*. It may be said by the advocates of these theories: True, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are one in *essence*, but are distinct and three in *attributes*; we believe as firmly as you that they are one in *essence or substratum*; but we also believe, say the advocates of one theory, that in that one essence inhere three divine minds, each thinking, feeling, willing, acting, for himself; or, we believe, say the advocates of the other theory, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have each his own distinct intellect, consciousness and will.

This metaphysical distinction and statement, in our view, does not relieve these theories at all from the objections which we have brought against them.

Take the boldest and frankest of these theories, — that there are three divine minds, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in one divine essence or being. This same philosophy resolves every *mind* into essence or substance or substratum, and attributes; and thus we have, according to this theory fully carried out, *three divine substances* or essences, with their attributes, in *one divine substance* or essence.

Or, if we take the more cautiously expressed theory, — that in one divine essence there are three sets of divine attributes, three divine intellects, three divine sensibilities, three divine wills, — we see that it is not really diverse from the other, and is easily reducible to it. For what, according to this same philosophy, are intellect, sensibility or susceptibility, and will, but *mental faculties*, powers pertaining to a *mind*? Or, rather, what are they but *a mind*, in certain classified relations, or operating in particular ways, — exercising thought, feeling and purpose? In other words, three divine intellects, three divine sensitivities or capacities of affection, and three divine wills, in one divine essence or being, are three divine *minds* in one divine essence or being; which, as we have seen, are three divine essences, with their attributes, in one divine essence.

## III.

THEOLOGY AS A SCIENCE — ITS DIGNITY AND VALUE.<sup>1</sup>

WHEN one enters upon the duties of a new and responsible office, especially when a new institution opens its doors, and invites the educated and Christian intellect of the land to resort thither for professional training and instruction, it is expected of him who enters upon such duties that he shall set forth in some sort the claims of that department which he comes to teach — binding, with pious hand, what little wreath he can about the altar at which he is to serve.

I am to speak, then, on this occasion, of *systematic theology*. And what, then, is THEOLOGY? Is it a science, and in what sense? Is it a progressive science? What is its rank, as such, in the scale of sciences? What, also, its practical value and importance? These questions demand answer in the present discourse. I shall undertake to show that theology is a *science*; that it is a *progressive* science; that it is of the *highest rank and dignity* as such; that it is also of *highest practical value and importance*.

I. Theology is a *science*. This is evident from the name itself; from any and every correct definition of the same.

What, then, is theology? What means the word?

<sup>1</sup> An Inaugural Address, delivered on assuming the Duties of Professor of Systematic Theology in Chicago Theological Seminary, Oct. 20, 1858.

Literally, the science of God. In a wider sense, however, I understand by theology the science of the Christian religion — the systematic statement of the principles and doctrines of the Christian faith. As botany is the science which explains the structure and laws of the vegetable kingdom ; as astronomy has for its object to unfold the arrangements and movements of the heavenly bodies ; as psychology is the science of the human mind ; so theology has for its definite aim and end the correct statement of those great truths and principles which constitute the Christian faith.

But here we are met by the objection that religion, and especially the Christian religion, is entirely and eminently a practical thing, not a matter of theory and speculation, not a thing to be learned from books or taught in schools, not, in fact, of the nature of science at all — a simple matter of the heart, and not of the head. It becomes necessary, then, at the outset, to make good our definition.

When we affirm that theology is a science, we do not affirm that science and religion are identical. There may be a science without religion, and a religion without science. So, too, there may be a science of religion. We maintain that there is, and that theology is that science. It was the great mistake of the Socratic and Platonic philosophy to make virtue and knowledge identical. For a man to do right, it was only necessary that he should know what the right is, since the right is always that which is most useful and best. But, alas, human history in all ages has but too clearly shown that to know the right is not always to do it — that virtue and knowledge are by no means the same thing. Religion, certainly, is not science. Viewed as

the relation or state of the individual only with respect to its Maker, religion is, as the objection asserts, a practical thing, a matter of the heart, and not to be learned from books and schools. It does not follow, however, that science has nothing to do with it, even as such — that there may not even be a science of religion itself. In one sense religion is an affair of the heart, not of the head; in another sense it is a thing to be learned and understood, or misapprehended, as the case may be. For that feeling and faith of the renewed heart toward its God, which we call personal religion, is a feeling and a faith which rest upon divine truth as their basis, and that truth must be known in order to be believed. If, with pious Anselm, we may truly affirm, “I believe in order that I may know,” with not less truth may it be said, I know in order that I may believe. The object on which my faith fastens must be an object of knowledge; the thing believed must be a thing known, or supposed to be known. In order, for example, to believe in God, must I not, know of necessity, something respecting him — that he is and, in a measure, at least, what he is, and why I believe that he is, and that he is thus and thus? So much, then, is evidently science. In order to the prayer of faith must I not know “that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”? This, too, is science.

Understanding by the term Christian religion, then, not so much the faith of the individual soul as the system of divine truth on which that individual faith must ever rest, it is evident that a science unfolding and correctly stating that system of divine truth becomes possible; and not possible, merely, but in the highest

sense desirable, and even necessary. Theology is that science.

Botany, and astronomy, and psychology, to recur to the illustrations already given, are all practical matters; they deal with facts, with concrete realities. It is their business to observe, to state, and, if possible, to explain those facts. They have to do with what is, merely, and not with what may be, or might be. Are they, then, on this account, the less to be regarded as sciences? Science gathers, arranges, unfolds whatever is to be known of plant and planet and human mind; and thus we have a botany, an astronomy, a psychology. In like manner, science gathers up the great facts and truths of the Christian religion, classifies, states, maintains, and, so far as she can, explains them, shows the relation of each to each, and the beautiful order and harmony of the whole; and thus we get a theology. The facts, the materials, are furnished in each case; given, not invented; plant, planet, laws and operations of the human mind, the great doctrines of revealed truth, these are not any of them of human device, but all and equally of divine origin; but the *science* of these facts and truths it is for us to construct as best we can.

Theology is a science, then, strictly speaking; the science of the Christian religion, regarded as a system of divine truth.

II. Theology, I further maintain, is not only a science but a *progressive* science.

In some sense every science is progressive, and necessarily so. Science, it must be remembered, is not the thing itself, but only our knowledge of the thing; not the plants, the planets, the laws of mental operation;



the divine truths, but only our knowledge of these things. These things themselves, as objects of knowledge, may be complete, finished, perfect; no further progress therein to be hoped for or desired. Our knowledge of these objects may, on the other hand, be very incomplete, wholly imperfect, and therefore capable of greatest improvement and progress. It is thus with all science. It is thus with our knowledge of Christian truth. In the truth itself, as given, revealed, there can be no improvement, no progress. It came from the hand of its Author as the stars came, and the flowers of the field, complete, nothing to be added thereto. But in our apprehension of divine truth great progress may be made, and is to be devoutly hoped for. In the course of centuries of human thought and profound study of sacred truth, it were, indeed, strange if no progress were made in the mode of apprehending and stating that truth. To suppose this, is to suppose that in one of the noblest, and at the same time most difficult, departments of thought and investigation to which the mind of man can devote its energies no advance is possible; that as regards that department, with all its sublime and intimately connected and far reaching truths, there is nothing further to be learned, but all that can be known is already and completely known. Was, then, the science of theology complete as it came from the hands of Augustine or of Calvin, of Luther, of Owen and Howe? May it not possibly have made a little progress, even since the days of Edwards? Has the human mind made absolutely no advance in this noblest of all sciences since the Bishop of Hippo wrote? When John Locke first proposed that the Epistles of Paul should be read like any other letters, that is, con-

secutively, in a connected manner, and not as detached proof-texts, whereby their life and power were greatly diminished, if not destroyed, he took a step quite in advance of the mode then prevalent of interpreting Scripture. When, as Sir William Hamilton has shown, the Westminster Assembly of divines so far departed from the received standards, as to drop out of their system that cardinal doctrine of Protestantism, as received and taught by Luther and Calvin, and held essential by both — the doctrine of *personal assurance* of salvation as essential to a saving faith — some progress was made, we must think, in the manner of apprehending divine truth. And when the New England theologians, taking counsel of common sense, distinguished more definitely than had hitherto been done, between *sin* and *depravity*; the one denoting the sinful act, the other the corrupt nature underlying all specific sinful acts, and from which all such acts proceed; the one, the sinner's own personal choice and conduct, for which he is personally guilty and responsible, the other a nature inherited from his ancestors, over which he had no control, and for which he is not therefore personally responsible; when thus they charge sin home upon the sinner who commits it, instead of allowing him to share it with the first parents of the race, or, on the other hand, compelling him to bear the blame of what was done centuries before he was born; it would seem that in this, too, some progress was made toward a more sensible and correct view of divine truth.

The distinction between natural and moral inability, which is of recent origin, might also be mentioned as an instance in point. When it is affirmed that the sinner cannot repent and obey God, it is of some con-

sequence to know whether this inability is a want of any of the powers and faculties, mental or physical, that are requisite to such obedience, or simply a want of inclination or disposition to obey; whether, in other words, it is really and properly a *can* not, or only a *will* not. Something is gained, therefore, when we make the distinction in question, provided the term itself is still retained.

It were easy to name other points, in respect to which theological science has made progress within the last fifty years. May we not hope that something is still to be gained as regards both the clearer apprehension and the better statement of divine truth; that as time passes on, and the human mind advances in all other knowledge, and science enlarges her boundaries in all other directions, light may break forth also upon that which is chiefest and noblest of all, the science of revealed truth. Indeed, so rapid is the progress of all other science, and so closely connected and interwoven is every science with every other, and all with this the chief of all, that it is impossible that the clearer apprehension of the truths which lie round about our science, should not cast light, also, upon theology itself.

Indeed the whole history of theology shows that in its very nature it is a progressive science. Those creeds and formularies in which it stands embodied to-day, are themselves the growth of time, the work of centuries. In the able words of a recent writer: "To shut up a single individual with the mere text of the Scriptures, and demand that by his own unassisted studies and meditations upon it he should, during his own life time build up a statement of the doctrine of the Trinity, like that of Nice; of the doctrine of the person of Christ,

like that of Chalcedon ; of the doctrine of the atonement, like that of the Augsburg and Helvetic confessions ; of the doctrines of sin and predestination, like that of Dort and Westminster, would be to require an impossibility. It would be like demanding that a theologian of the year 150 should construct, in his single day and generation, the entire systematic theology of the year 1850 ; that a Justin Martyr, e.g. should anticipate and perform the entire thinking of a thousand minds, and of seventeen hundred years. And yet the substance and staple of all this vast and comprehensive system of divinity was in that Bible which Justin Martyr possessed without note or comment."<sup>1</sup>

There has been *progress*, then, in theological science. If this is so, as regards the centuries past, why may it not be so in the centuries yet future ? Who will say where this process is to cease ? where all further thinking and all further advance is to be precluded ? Whereabout on the line of human thought and progress shall the gate be shut down on all further inquiry, and the fixture of the given present become the finality of all coming time ? And who is to do this ?

III. Theology is a science of *highest rank and dignity*. I claim for it not only a place, but the very chiefest place, among the sciences. It is, in truth, what the greatest intellects of the world have ever pronounced it ; what Plato and Aristotle, what Bacon and Leibnitz, among the philosophers, have called it, the *queen* of sciences. It moves among them as the queen of night walks the heavens, surrounded by ministering constellations ; or rather as a central sun, far shining, and lighting up with its beams the attendant orbs, and giving

<sup>1</sup> Bibliotheca Sacra, July, 1858.



to each its laws of motion. All other sciences point to this as their explanation; they presuppose and involve this as truly as the movements of the planets presuppose a central source of attraction. Whatever science you select you come back to this as your final conclusion.

It was a lofty and yet a just conception of the great master mind of antiquity, that among the various departments of human thought and knowledge, throned above and overlooking them all, there is a science of science itself—a *first* philosophy. Theology is that first philosophy, that science of sciences. To make good this high claim, it is sufficient simply to advert to the nature of the themes and objects with which it is the province of theology to deal. What science treats of things such and so great, or is so rich in its field of investigation? Theology brings us at once into the immediate presence of some of the profoundest problems of human thought; problems whose depth and difficulty have taxed and baffled the noblest minds in all ages of the world, and always will. Take, for example, the doctrine of *God*—the truth which lies at the very threshold of the science. What mystery surrounds us as we approach this doctrine! It is veiled and wrapped about with impenetrable darkness, as Sinai of old, when the Most High descended upon it in his mantle of cloud. There is a God. The proofs of his existence we find not only about us, in external, material forms, but what is far more, and more to the purpose, within us, in our own moral spiritual nature. We need not go out of ourselves to find God. But what is that existence which we thus designate? Who shall explain it? that existence, infinite and absolute, without beginning of days or end of years, unlimited by time or place, all knowing,

all powerful, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. The human mind, in approaching such a theme, is lost in the vain endeavor to comprehend its own thought.

If the very existence of such a being is to us a mystery, the *mode* of that existence is surely not less so. What a problem, incomprehensible to man, lies here. Threeness, yet oneness. One, yet not *so* one as to exclude the threeness. Three, yet not *so* three as to be the less truly and strictly one.

Or, turning to the great central fact in the world's history, the incarnation of this great and glorious being, God manifest in the flesh — God-man; the God that "rolls the stars along," and that said once, "Let there be light," clothed now in such feeble flesh as we; a babe in Bethlehem of Judea; a man in Nazareth; what mystery more grand and sublime than this has ever been conceived by man.

Another and not less difficult problem, with which, in some form or other, theology has to deal, is the doctrine of *sin*. What is it? How came it? Why came it?

*What is sin?* Every conscious act of transgression, doubtless, is sin. But is that all? Does sin consist entirely in such acts? What shall we say, then, of the nature that underlies all such acts, and from which they all spring? Is that nature, also, sinful, and in what sense? A question not yet fairly settled. Does sin consist entirely in the voluntary act? If so, what shall we say of the affections, that are not under the direct control of the will, and yet for whose specific action we are held responsible, as in the command to love God supremely, and our fellow men as ourselves? These are questions involving no little difficulty, as the history of theological controversy abundantly shows.



The simple fact that the ablest and most acute minds have held entirely different views, and reached entirely different conclusions, in respect to this matter, shows that it is a question not lightly to be put aside.

And then, *how came* such a thing as sin ever to be? How is it possible for a pure and holy nature to sin? a question that has never yet been duly considered, but in truth one of the most difficult problems of human thought. How could a pure and holy mind cherish, in the first instance, an unholy thought? a nature, all right, harbor a desire or affection all wrong? There must have been such a beginning, and it must have begun in a pure and virtuous mind. The fact we know, but who can explain or account for it? Is it the work of a tempter? And who, then, is this tempter, and how did sin begin in him? Driven to the wall in this direction, shall we say, with an eminent divine, that God is himself the efficient producer of the first sinful impulse of the creature? "But God tempteth no man, neither is tempted of any."

But more than all, and harder than all to be answered, why was such a thing as sin ever permitted, not to say produced, in the providence and under the dominion of a perfectly wise, perfectly holy, and at the same time, absolutely powerful God? Great unsolved problem of the ages, this. No, thoughtful and well-informed mind will ever think lightly of this profound problem, or of any serious and earnest attempt at its rational solution.

In truth, this whole doctrine of sin — what it is, and whence it is, and why it is — is one sublime and terrible mystery. Like the shadow that men call death, it confronts us on our way, and the self-satisfied theologian,

intent on making all things plain, may well exclaim, as he meets this dread apparition in his path :

“ Whence and what art thou, execrable shape,  
That dar’st oppose my way.”

It stalks on, questioned or unquestioned, through all the centuries of human history and human thought, beating down with its iron flail the pride of human intellect, putting to flight the subtleties of the schools, baffling the wisdom of the learned, and the faith of the devout. We may well apply to it that sublime language of Eliphaz the Temanite: “ In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on man, fear came upon me and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face ; the hair of my flesh stood up. It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof ; an image was before mine eyes ; there was silence, and I heard a voice saying : ‘ Shall mortal man be more just than God ? ’ ”

Such are some of the great unsolved problems of Christian theology. And yet, with all the difficulty which invests these themes, there is still a loftiness and grandeur about them, a quiet repose, that is refreshing to the mind. We stand before these sublime mysteries of our faith as one stands at the foot of Jungfrau, among the solitudes of the Alps, far removed from the cares and vices of the vexed and vexing world, all whose noise and movement die away and are lost in the distance below, while you stand in the presence of the eternal hills, whose frowning and awful heights are to you indeed inaccessible, but in whose silence, and shadow, and strength, your spirit finds a calm, sweet repose.

But it may be said to all this, *Cui bono?* of what use are all these speculations? Grant, if you please, the difficulty of the problems, and the dignity of the science that is ever taxing itself in vain to solve what can probably never be solved by man, of what real value is such a science to the world and to the church, in this practical, hard-working age?

I proceed then to show,

IV. That theology is a science of the *highest practical value*.

There are three respects in which this may be made to appear: in its relation to the prevalence of extreme and erroneous views in religious matters; in its relation to the power of the pulpit; and in its relation to the formation of personal character. And

1. *In relation to the prevalence of extreme and erroneous views.* The tendency in the religious world is and has always been to certain opposite extremes in matters of religious belief, which extremes are always errors. Nothing but a sound and true theology can either prevent or counteract such errors.

For example: there has been a strong tendency to exalt, on the one hand, the province of *reason*; on the other, that of *faith*. The history of the Christian church is, in one of its aspects, a history of the conflict between these two opposite and extreme tendencies, rationalism and pietism. If the latter finds its home in the bosom of the Romish church, the former as manifestly finds something congenial in the spirit and principles of Protestantism; yet to neither the one nor the other of these churches is the tendency to either of these principles exclusively confined. Early in the history of Christianity the conflict of these two tendencies begins

to show itself. We see it in the Montanism and Gnosticism of the early church; faith as against knowledge, and knowledge as against faith. At a later period, it reappears under the forms of mysticism and scholasticism, as in the Middle Ages. While in our own period, the pietism as opposed to the rationalism of Germany is but another manifestation of the tendency to the same extremes.

I need hardly pause to say here, that piety and learning, faith and reason, are both essential to a true Christianity, and neither can well and wisely be dissevered from the other. If pious feeling needs to be enlightened and regulated by sound knowledge, so also does reason need to be made humble and devout by simple faith. The due balance of the two is needed, but that balance, as all history shows, is difficult to attain and to retain. Piety, a matter of feeling, a thing of the heart, tends to dissever itself from the reflection and abstraction of sober thought; while reason again, the speculative intellect, is restive under the restraints of faith, impatient to strike out a more daring and adventurous course, and to build on some other than the only sure foundation of all certainty in religious things, the word of God. Such knowledge becomes dangerous. But equally dangerous is the faith that is without knowledge. Jealous of speculation and inquiry, neglecting careful investigation and scientific culture, it becomes superficial, and degenerates into mere enthusiasm or bigotry. On this infidelity seizes, and finds its fitting occasion. So goes all history of the Christian church. Nothing but a correct and sound theology, that shall strike the balance between these opposing principles, and assign each its due place in the Christian

scheme, can effectually counteract the tendency to one or the other of these extremes.

As another example of the tendency to extremes in matters of religion, I may instance the undue attachment to *forms* and *organizations*, on the one hand, as opposed to the undue neglect of them on the other. Doubtless the church spirit, the denominational tendency has its use and end. It serves to bind more closely together the followers of Christ, thus united in church relations, and make them one in spirit and action. But give this principle undue place, and the church organization, the form, becomes speedily paramount, and the doctrine, the substance of Christianity, comparatively overlooked. Now the whole history of Christianity shows the tendency of the human mind, in religious matters, to make more and more of the *form*, the outward visible organization, as time progresses, to the relative neglect of the substance ; and in proportion as this is the case, the great doctrines and principles of the Christian system are suffered in a measure to drop out of sight and lose their importance. Differences of doctrinal sentiment are held of less account than differences of ecclesiastical order, and theology, as a science, dwindles and languishes, while petty questions of church organism, and petty matters of churchly furniture and form, become the paramount and all important topics of thought and study.

The Puseyism of the English church is a perfect and legitimate illustration of the tendency to which I refer ; nor can any intelligent and observant eye fail to notice the rapidly increasing development of the same tendency in more than one of the great Christian organizations of our own country.



Quite in the opposite extreme, and hardly less disastrous, would be the entire neglect of forms and organizations. Absolute individualism is certainly not the normal condition of man, whether in matters of religion or of secular life. In church, as in state, there must be society and organism, body as well as soul, form as well as substance. Complete independence is not the highest form of Christian life, if indeed it be compatible with it.

I have not time, nor on the present occasion is it, perhaps, needful, to show, by reference to the history of the Christian church, how to one or the other of these extremes the human mind seems ever tending, though more frequently, it must be confessed, and far more strongly, to the former than to the latter.

There is no surer way to counteract this tendency than to bring forward the science of systematic theology into the front ground, and assign it its true place and rank. In proportion as the great truths and principles of the Christian system assume their just and proper importance, the little matters of mere ecclesiastical form and order dwindle into insignificance, and vanish away, as the stars disappear from the heavens before the rising sun.

Closely allied to the error last mentioned is the prevailing tendency to make either too much, on the one hand, or too little on the other, of those creeds and confessions of faith, which at various times and by various bodies have been drawn up for the use of the Christian church. What is ancient is sacred. That which a former age has believed and practised is clothed with an authority inviolable, and bears with it the force of demonstration. Councils, decrees, confessions of



faith, aside from their own inherent and proper value, gather thus a power and influence they were never intended to possess, an influence increasing rather than diminishing as time progresses, until it comes to be regarded as *prima facie* evidence of unsoundness in the faith if one ventures to differ, in never so slight a matter, from the standards that time has consecrated, and the piety of the church reveres. Now the men who drew up these ancient confessions may, or may not, have been wiser and better men than the world has since seen; they may or may not have had superior facilities for arriving at a correct judgment in matters of doubtful and difficult adjustment. Their work may or may not, therefore, be justly entitled to a deference not accorded to other and more recent investigations and conclusions. It is certainly possible that the devout scholar of the present day, surrounded by all the aids and appliances of modern time, availing himself of all the progress that has been made, and all the light that has been thrown upon his path, progress in natural, in mental, in moral, and in political science, light upon matters of philology and matters of history, may, under these circumstances, bring to bear upon his work a mind not less thoroughly trained, and a degree of skill not inferior to that of the biblical student and divine of some preceding age; he may even be in circumstances more favorable to the forming of correct opinions and an impartial judgment on the questions that were agitated in the councils of Nice and Trent, or the synod of Augsburg, than were the fathers who sat in those councils, and drew up those decisions and decrees.

However that may be, it is the cardinal doctrine of Protestantism that no doctrines of men are binding on

the conscience in matters of religion. Whether they be decisions of popes, or councils, or synods, or assemblies of divines, it matters not ; whether they be decrees, or catechisms, or creeds, or confessions of faith, not one of them all, be they what they may, is binding on the conscience of any man, be he who he may ; but only the pure word of God, and every man his own judge of what that word contains. This is *the root, the foundation and very groundwork* of Protestant faith. Give it up, and you give up the very fortress and citadel of Protestantism.

On the other hand, they are not wise who cry out against all creeds and formularies of Christian doctrine as useless, and worse than useless. It does not follow that because these things are not of binding authority, they are therefore of no avail. As guides of judgment, as landmarks to show where the old paths went, and in what way the ancient worthies trode, as helps to a correct decision in matters of doubtful moment, they are of high value. I will not, indeed, receive them as authority, and concede to them my own right of individual judgment ; but I will honor and respect them as the opinions of wise and good men, and as such deserving of respect. I will not ask what Athanasius, or Augustine, what Luther or Calvin, believed, in order that I may believe the same, and that *because they* believed it ; but I will ask what these men and others believed and taught that I may avail myself of their wisdom, and get what light I can upon the meaning of the sacred oracles, upon the heights, and depths, and difficult mountain passes of the Christian faith. If their doctrine seems to accord with the inspired word, rationally interpreted and intelligently weighed, I will gladly

receive it; and all the more gladly that it is the belief of such men. If it differs from what, in my best judgment, God's word means and teaches, then in so far will I differ from them, and no man shall deprive me of this liberty.

The tendency to an undue reliance on the formularies and confessions of a preceding age, or, on the other hand, to their depreciation and abandonment, finds its most effectual preventive in the diligent study and culture of systematic theology as a science. As nothing tends more to check the progress and discourage the study of theological science, than to set up the claim of authority for the decisions of the past, thus making the system of Christian doctrine, as taught in this or that age, by this or that eminent divine, in this or that creed, or confession, or catechism, a fixture and a finality, thus virtually taking God's word out of our hands; so, on the contrary, nothing will so effectually prevent this undue and exclusive reliance on the opinions and decisions of the past, as to elevate theological science to its proper place, and encourage men to study, diligently, and faithfully, and for themselves, the great system of truth contained in the sacred Scriptures, so as, if possible, clearly to apprehend and fully to master that noblest, sublimest, most difficult of all sciences, the science of the Christian religion.

In relation, then, to all such extreme and erroneous views, as preventing and counteracting the tendency, whether to rationalism, or its opposite; to undue churchism, or its opposite; to undue reliance on creeds, and symbols of faith, or their undue neglect; systematic theology becomes of the highest practical importance.

2. The practical value of our science appears, also, *in its relation to the power of the pulpit.*

It would seem to be a clear case, that in order to teach well, a man must clearly comprehend the things which he teaches; in order to speak well, and to the edification of the hearer, he must know the things whereof he affirms. If, as Cicero says, it is necessary for the orator to be familiar with all branches of knowledge, in order to speak well upon any subject, surely it is far more needful that he should understand well that one thing on which he is to discourse. He who is to present divine truth to men, in its simplicity, its beauty, its power, must understand divine truth, must grasp it in its outlines, and comprehend its relations, and all its fair proportions and harmonies, how each truth fits itself to each, and how every part contributes to the symmetry and proportion of the whole. Only the diligent study of Christian truth, as a system and a science, can enable him to do this.

The most powerful and faithful preaching of the gospel is that which rests upon and springs from the thorough, doctrinal study of the Scriptures. That which has no other foundation than mere feeling is superficial, and in its results evanescent. That preaching which is to move with power, and strike efficient blows, must lay hold upon the truth with a firm grasp, and wield it as the club of Hercules. Every doctrine of God's word, each eternal truth, massive and strong, stoutly seized and boldly swung, must be in its hand like the battle-axe of Cœur-de-Lion, that never struck in vain. No feeble and vague apprehension of truth, no partial and confused vision, no irresolute and unskilful handling of the divine armor can do this. He

that would handle well the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, must understand his weapon and its use. And to this he must be well and carefully trained. The man who has no musical science, and no knowledge of the instrument, may as well sit down to evoke the hidden harmonies of the organ, and develop all its sweetness and its power, as he who has no thorough knowledge of the system of Christian truth undertake to present that system in such a way as to make its grand and solemn tones accordant and harmonious. In order to touch a single chord aright, he must understand the whole science; in order to command a single key or a single stop aright, he must have at his command the entire instrument, in all its parts and with all its powers. Suppose the preacher to discourse upon the divine sovereignty. Without a clear comprehension of the relations of this great truth to the other parts of the system, its exact place among the truths that lie round about, and closely connected with it, such a knowledge as only careful, thorough, and wisely directed study of the whole system and science can give, he will be likely so to present this doctrine as to clash with other and equally important truths of the Christian scheme. He may so preach divine power as to leave no room for human freedom. Or if he treat of human ability, he may so present it as to leave no place for divine power and sovereignty. Urging his hearer to make to himself a new heart, he may so press upon him his own duty and responsibility in the matter, as to leave upon his mind the impression that the work is wholly man's, and that God has little to do with the sinner's conversion. Or seeking, on the other hand, to make his hearers feel their entire dependence on God's



Spirit for their salvation, he may so present this great truth as quite to relieve their minds from the pressure of immediate duty and responsibility, and leave them waiting in security and sin for God's good time, when it may be his pleasure to convert them. In neither case will such preaching be powerful and effective. The gospel that is thus awkwardly and unskillfully handled is not the gospel that is mighty to the pulling down of strongholds of error and of sin.

A sound theological training, so far from making men dull and ineffective preachers, makes them directly the reverse. It is the foundation and source of their power. The strength and efficiency of the pulpit, any where and at any time, is in direct proportion to the clearness with which the great truths of religion are apprehended by the preacher, in all their individual distinctness and their connected harmony. Who, in the days of Luther and Calvin, excelled those great theologians in the powerful presentation of truth from the pulpit? Or what more effective preachers of the word, in modern times, than our own Edwards and Bellamy? It was the theology of these men that made them strong in the pulpit. When Luther ascended the pulpit, princes and legates crowded to hear him; peasant and noble were bowed and swayed with one common emotion. When Calvin preached, magistrates and senates trembled, and syndics hastened to reconsider and revoke their decisions. It was no idle talk, it was no child's play with these men. Seizing the ponderous hammer of God's truth, and swinging it aloft, they brought it down with terrible effect upon the errors and follies of the time, smiting right earnestly. Yet Calvin and Luther were the great theologians of that day.



Of the power of Edwards as a preacher every one has heard. Discoursing of the justice of God as displayed in the punishment of the finally impenitent, so vividly did he set forth the terrible truth that had seized and possessed his mind, that the deep stillness which had crept over the audience as he proceeded, gave way at length to the sobs and groans of the agitated assembly. Of Bellamy, it is sufficient to say that he had it in his power to raise his hearers to their feet, or prostrate them to the floor, almost as one man, by the power of his discourse. It is related of President Edwards, that having listened to a sermon of Bellamy in his own pulpit, on a subject in which he was himself deeply interested, so fully was he carried away with the truth uttered and so lost to everything beside, that he walked homeward, earnestly engaged in conversation with the preacher, not noticing till he reached his own house that he had left his hat in the pulpit.

Now it was not idle declamation nor empty rhetoric with these men, but the simple power of truth, clearly perceived, earnestly believed, distinctly and powerfully presented, that wrought such effects. It was the eloquence of truth; God's truth, God's eloquence, and not theirs. Their power as preachers lay in their theology. That was the highest and best eulogium ever pronounced upon a preacher, the answer of the simple-hearted but devoutly pious negro to the clergyman, who asked him wherein consisted the great superiority of Bellamy's preaching: "O Massa, he make God *so great, so great!*" Yet these men, so terrible in the pulpit, so strong, so earnest, were the leading theologians of that day. Said I not rightly, that theo-

logical science is of practical value in its relation to the power of the pulpit.

3. The practical value of our science appears furthermore *in its relation to personal character.*

It has long been known that the pursuit, especially the intellectual pursuit, or profession, to which a man devotes himself, exerts a forming and controlling influence upon his character; makes him in great measure the man he is. In no pursuit, probably, is this effect more marked than in the sacred profession; and in no respect, perhaps, is it here so great, as in the influence which theological study exerts upon the mind and character of its true disciples. There is no science like it to impart strength of mind, or earnestness of purpose. It quickens and calls into action the highest powers of the soul. It taxes the intellect, it calls out the sensibilities, it demands the resoluteness of the will. It teaches the mind to scan with penetrating glance that which is high, and that which is deep; teaches it to gaze steadily at objects whose brightness is fearful, and brings it face to face with difficulties of no ordinary nature, which it must seize and overcome. Wrestling with God's eternal truth, it gains strength from the very contact, and is thrown but to rise the stouter wrestler. Standing habitually in the view of eternal realities, at once the most sublime and terrible, it gathers an earnestness of purpose from the solemn presence before which it moves. The mind that is trifling and vain; that lacks earnestness of purpose and sobriety of thought; that is deficient in vigor of intellect and soundness of judgment, in clearness of apprehension, or in resoluteness of will, may do something, perhaps, in other pursuits and professions, but will find no place

for itself in this — no footing for itself in these deeper waters, that rise above the mountains and submerge all the plains.

Yet is the pursuit of this science not inconsistent with the gentler traits and finer impulses of humanity. The great theologians, both ancient and modern, have been of rich and varied powers, and of gifts diversified; men of vigorous intellect, clear conceptions, strong and well-balanced mind, earnest purpose; and yet withal of noble and generous heart, of ready sympathy, gentle, and alive to all the finer sensibilities of our nature. Lovers of truth they have ever been, and yet withal lovers of beauty, both in nature and in art, and lovers moreover of that innocent mirth with which a truly great mind ever sparkles, as the great ocean sparkles and flashes in the sun. Such, pre-eminently, were the early divines of New England; men whose learning and piety were blended with a genial sympathy and a ready wit; men not less quick at repartee than strong in argument, and whom it were not quite safe for a sluggish mind to meet in either encounter.

It has been sometimes supposed that theological studies tend to make one crabbed and repulsive, selfish and unfeeling, abstracted from the joys and sorrows and wants and strifes of the great living and struggling world, absorbed in thought, and interested only in useless metaphysical distinctions. No impression can be more unjust. Minds that are by nature cold and unfeeling may, indeed, hold converse with this as with any other science; may pass round about, and mark its defences, and count its towers; may even pass its portals, and wander through its grand and stately halls, insensible to its true beauty and uninspired by its lofti-

ness. But it is not the science that makes them so. And not such, in fact, have been the great theologians of the ago. One need only look into the letters of Luther to find that he was a man of soul; a man whose heart was not less active than his brain; a man of strong affections and ready sympathies; a man running over with wit and humor. Children climbed upon his knee, and found in him no unwilling playfellow. He had an eye also for the grand and the beautiful. From that lofty castle on the Wurtzburg, where he lay concealed for a time, he must have looked forth, not unmoved, upon the scene spread out below him. Nature in her gentlest as well as in her wildest moods had a voice for him; and the little bird that perched on a bough by his window, taking no thought for the morrow, but singing its vesper hymn in quietness, and leaving the hand that holds the great round world to take care of it, and of the morrow, taught him also the sweet lesson of casting all his care upon the same mighty arm, the same kind providence.

Luther's great peer and fellow reformer, Calvin, was a man of somewhat sterner mould. We look in vain in his pages for any glow of enthusiasm or touch of sentiment. His clear intellect transmitted the pure ray of truth unrefracted and undimmed, and no play of prismatic color tinged its simple brightness. Are we, then, to think of this man, so calm and so strong and so severe, as we find him in his writings, as having no gentleness in his nature, no sympathy with man, no love of the beautiful; as being, in a word, all intellect, and no soul? If so, we shall greatly mistake him. Few spots on earth combine in greater proportion the various elements that please the eye and the cultivated

taste, and cast the spell of beauty over the willing mind, than the shores and waters of that fair lake on which Geneva sits looking out in queenly pride. Along those shores did the great reformer never walk at even-tide, musing, his great soul in harmony with the scene? And did he never, as he walked and mused, raise his eye to admire that beauty, and to rest for a moment on the snowy summit of Mont Blanc in the distance, lifting his broad shoulders against the sky?

We think of Knox, the Scottish reformer, as even more harsh and stern than Calvin; yet his portrait belies him not. You see in that clear eye and that lofty brow, blended with vigor of intellect and firmness of will, a calm and lofty repose, a gentleness, and a refinement of soul, that mark the highly cultivated man. Cradled among the hills, and familiar with the solitude and wildness of the Scottish highlands, did he never, think you, climb on a summer or an autumn day to the top of Arthur's Seat, that overlooks palace and castle, city and sea, and enjoy a loveliness seldom surpassed?

Edwards was a man of giant intellect; yet we find him pausing to admire the flower at his feet, and the beauty of the landscape, that seemed to him so full of the glory of God. We see him planting with careful hand the graceful elms in front of his dwelling, under whose shadow he might sit, and which still stand in majestic beauty and greenness, the ornament and pride of the town.

It touches us to read, in the memoir of Bellamy, that letter to his daughter after the death of his wife:

SATURDAY MORNING, Sept. 8, before sunrise.

"The solemn day is past; and here I sit alone — not one left — all my children gone — my wife in the silent grave. My children and grandchildren will follow soon. This is not our home."



It moves us, also, to a kindly feeling for the somewhat stern and stoical Hopkins, to hear that he would come down from his study, after meditating long on the glory and love of God as displayed in the atonement of Christ, and rubbing his hands together in an ecstasy of delight, walk back and forth across the room, his whole countenance beaming with holy joy.

But we must not dwell upon a theme which has already carried us beyond the intended limits. Such as I have described were these men, who in their day stood foremost in the pulpit, and foremost in theological science; men of strong and vigorous minds, of earnest purpose, resolute and fearless men, but of generous impulses and noble hearts. And such, need I add, is the style of men and of preachers that we of the present time need, and hope to produce.

For this purpose the Congregational churches of the Northwest open here a school of theological training. They consecrate it, however, not to a sect or party, not to a creed or catechism, but to Christ and his church. The great eternal principles of divine truth, they place at its foundation. On them, as on a corner stone tried and precious, let it rest. If those principles endure, if those truths stand, it shall stand with them. If they fall and come to nought, it shall fall with them.

Of myself, I can only say, that as I contemplate the greatness of the work to which you have called me, and my own personal unfitness for it, of which I am but too painfully conscious, it is not without hesitation that I assume the duties of the chair in which you now install me. But your cordial and earnest welcome gives me courage and strength. I cast myself fearlessly upon your manly and generous hearts, and upon the



strong arm of my God, who giveth wisdom to them that lack, and who hath said : " My grace is sufficient for thee " ; " As thy day, so shall thy strength be."

And now, O God, we commend to thee this institution. Be thou its strength and its defense. Guard it against the dangers to which it may be exposed. Sustain it during its years of infancy, and the struggles of its growth and early manhood. Raise up friends and helpers for it in its darkest hours. Let no dissensions or jealousies spring up among those who sustain it, to diminish its strength or mar its usefulness. Let it be a fountain open for the healing of the nations. May its streams mingle with the great current of the world's thought and feeling, to make it purer and better. When they who now with prayer and faith open and consecrate this institution shall have passed away from the scenes of earthly toil, may its streams, pure and sweet, still flow on to bless the world, and make glad the city of our God, until they shall at last be swallowed up in the river of life that flows from beneath thy throne.

## IV.

### PLACE AND VALUE OF MIRACLES IN THE CHRISTIAN SYSTEM.<sup>1</sup>

As in all warfare, so in the attack and defence of Christianity, the battle-ground changes from time to time as the enemies of the truth change their tactics, or direct their assault now upon this, now upon that point in the line of our defences. At present it is the *supernatural element* in Christianity that is more directly and fiercely assailed. Around this the battle rages. And, what is not a little remarkable, it is from the professed friends of Christianity, from those who call themselves its disciples, rather than from its open and avowed enemies, that this attack mainly proceeds. It is no longer the Jew, the Mohammedan, the Pagan, but the rationalist and sceptic, within the sacred precincts of the Christian temple, and before its very altars, who take it upon themselves to call in question, or utterly to deny, the supernatural element of the Christian religion.

Miracles, we are told, are no longer to be relied upon as evidences of the divine authority of the Christian system. However appropriate they may have been in a remote and less enlightened age, they are now quite out of place. As civilization and science have progressed, they have left this method of thinking and reasoning

<sup>1</sup> From the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. xix. No. 74. April, 1862.

wholly in the back-ground. It is now understood, by all cultivated and philosophic minds, that in the domain of matter everything moves on by fixed and determined laws, which are never violated, never suspended, and which never change. This invariable operation, this universal order and unity of physical causes, is the first principle of the laws of nature, and whatever is at variance with this principle must be unconditionally and unhesitatingly rejected. The material universe is discovered to be one great system of self-sustaining and self-evolving laws, a grand whole moving on in harmony and adequate to itself. Even the idea of original creation is now coming to be rejected as an antiquated notion, in view of the recent developments of science with respect to the origination of species. In a word, any interference with or deviation from the established and eternal order of things, is a physical impossibility, which no amount of evidence can substantiate ; and the miracles, so called, of the Christian system, which in a ruder and darker age were considered as its main supports and defences, are, in reality, at the present day the chief hinderances to its acceptance.

Such is the position taken by the modern sceptic and rationalist. It is a position which the advocates of Christianity are called upon to meet. Mere denunciation and reproach of those who thus reason, will not suffice. Ecclesiastical censure will not meet the case. There is a demand for thorough investigation and solid argument. The position is one which overlooks and commands one of the most important defences of the Christian system ; and to leave it in possession of the enemy, is to abandon Christianity itself as incapable of defence. Under these circumstances, it becomes nec-

essary for the disciples of the Christian faith to re-examine with special care the whole matter of the *supernatural element* in Christianity, and possibly to re-adjust, in some respects, their own position with respect to it.

There are, in any such investigation, three questions to be specially considered : What is a miracle ? What *proves* a miracle ? What does a miracle *prove* ?

#### 1. WHAT IS A MIRACLE ?

It is of the first importance, in this controversy, that the advocates of the Christian system should understand precisely what it is that they are contending for, — how much and how little is involved in, and essential to, the idea of a miracle. If we mistake not, some uncertainty, perhaps we might say some vagueness, of opinion exists on this point in many minds ; some are disposed to include more and others less under that term. With some it means one thing, and with some another. Sometimes it is used to denote whatever is *wonderful*, as prodigies, portents, matters inexplicable, — the *mirabile* of the Latins, the *τέρας* of the Greeks. Others, again, restrict the term within much narrower limits, understanding by it some *contradiction* or *violation* of the laws of nature. By others, it is regarded as a *suspension*, rather than a contradiction, of those laws ; while yet others would prefer to call it a *deviation* from, rather than either a contradiction or suspension of, natural laws. A miracle, according to some, is a departure from all law ; with others, a departure not from all, but merely from all *known* law.

What, then, is a miracle, and how much shall we include under it ? Is it any and every wonderful,

apparently inexplicable thing? Is it a direct violation or contradiction of the laws of nature? Is it a suspension of those laws? Is it simply a deviation from them? Is it a thing without and above all law, or has it laws of its own?

If we seek for that which is *essential* to a miracle, in distinction from what is merely *incidental* or *occasional*, we shall find the ultimate idea to be that of divine interposition to accomplish, by special and supernatural agency, a specific end not otherwise attained. Whether the result be a violation of the laws of nature or not, whether it be a suspension of those laws or not, it must at least be something beyond the power of mere nature to accomplish; something supernatural, requiring for its accomplishment divine interposition and agency. Whether this agency be immediately exerted, or mediately, through human or other instrumentality, the power must be ultimately divine power, and that not according to the ordinary course of divine operations in nature. Where we have this, we have all that is essential to a miracle,—Deity interposing to accomplish, by special agency, an effect not to be reached in the natural course and order of events.

This is accordant with the definitions given by standard authorities. Thus Webster: "an event or effect contrary to the established constitution and course of things, or a deviation from the known laws of nature; a supernatural event." The term miraculous he defines as, "performed supernaturally, or by a power beyond the ordinary agency of natural laws; effected by the direct agency of almighty power, and not by natural causes."

Johnson gives the following: "*miracle*—1. a wonder;

something above human power (*Shakespeare*); 2. [in theology] an effect above human or natural power, performed in attestation of some truth (*Bentley*); *miraculous* — effected by power more than natural (*Herbert*); *miraculously* — by power above that of nature (*Dryden*)."

The essential idea, as expressed in these definitions, is that of *divine interposition and agency*, not necessarily involving any contradiction or suspension of natural laws; but only a power working above and beyond those laws; *praeter*, but not of necessity *contra*, ordinem naturae. Whether the latter idea is really involved in the true notion of a miracle, we shall presently inquire.

As the subject relates particularly to the miracles recorded in Scripture, a brief examination of the terms used in the Scriptures to denote miraculous events may cast light on the question before us. The terms most frequently employed in the New Testament to denote miracles, are *δυνάμεις*, *σημεῖα*, and *τέρατα*. When the idea prominent in the mind of the writer or speaker is that of the divine power, or source, from which the miracle emanates, the term *δύναμις* (Hebrew *גִּבּוּרִית*) *strength, power*, is employed; plural, *mighty works*. Thus the miracles of Christ are designated in Matt. xi. 20, 21, 23; xiii. 58; Mark vi. 5, 12; Luke x. 13; and those of Paul in Acts xix. 11. The term is also used by Paul himself, in his epistles, as 1 Cor. xii. 10; Gal. iii. 5.

Where the prominent idea is not that of the power employed in working the miracle, or the source whence it emanates, but rather the object to be accomplished by it, *its evidential force on the mind of the spectator*,



the term employed is *σημεῖον* (Hebrew *אֵימָנָה*) *sign*, by which anything may be known, and specifically, by which the divine power and presence may be recognized. Miraculous events are *σημεῖα*, inasmuch as they *indicate* or evince the presence and power of the Supreme Being. Thus, 1 Cor. xiv. 22, the gift of tongues is called “a *sign*, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not;” and, i. 22 the Jews are said to require a *sign*. So Jonah was a *sign* to the Ninevites, Luke xi. 30; and the child Jesus was to be a sign spoken against, Luke ii. 34. In all these cases, the miracle is designed as a token by which the unbelieving world may be convinced, and so, is *σημεῖον*, a *sign*. Accordingly the various miracles wrought by or required of our Lord and his apostles, *in proof* of his divine mission, are termed *σημεῖα*. Thus, Matt. xii. 38 and Mark viii. 11, 12, the Pharisees seek a *sign* from him; that is, something miraculous, to prove that he was divine. So Luke xi. 16. So also John ii. 18 and vi. 30: What *sign* showest thou? and ii. 23: Many believed on him, seeing the *signs*, or miracles. The miracle at Cana, John ii. 11, is spoken of as the beginning of miracles (*signs*), on the part of Christ. So also Nicodemus, John iii. 2: “No man can do these miracles (*signs*) which thou doest, except,” etc. See also John vi. 2, 14, 26; vii. 31; ix. 16; xx. 30. The term is also applied to the miracles wrought by the disciples in proof of their divine mission, after the ascension of their Lord. Thus, Mark xvi. 17, 20: “These *signs* shall follow them that believe”; “The Lord working with them, and confirming the word with *signs* following.” In these and the like passages we have the clue, if we mistake not, to the true significance of the miracles of the New

Testament. They are tokens or evidences of the divine commission of the person who performs them. The cases above cited, under the term *σημεῖα* especially, seem to refer to miracles as *evidences producing conviction and belief in the mind*.

Where not so much the end or object of the miracle is the idea prominent in the mind, but rather the effect of it in exciting astonishment or fear, the term *τέρας* — *wonder, prodigy* — is employed; always, however, in connection with *σημεῖον*. Thus, Acts ii. 19: "Wonders in the heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath" (*τέρατα . . . σημεῖα*); vii. 36: Wonders and signs in Egypt and the Red Sea; John iv. 48: "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe"; Acts ii. 43: "Many wonders and signs were done by the apostles." See, also, iv. 30; v. 12; vi. 8; xiv. 3; xv. 12, where the same expressions are used with reference to the miracles wrought by the apostles. The terms are sometimes employed, also, with reference to the miracles, or pretended miracles, of false prophets, as in Mark xiii. 22 and Matt. xxiv. 24, and 2 Thess. ii. 9.

The use of *τέρας* in connection with *σημεῖον*, in this manner, is evidently borrowed from Hebrew usage, which in like manner connects the corresponding words, *מוֹפֵת* and *אֲמוּנָה*.

A miracle, then, so far as the Scripture use of terms can guide us, is some wonderful event, such as requires divine power<sup>1</sup> to perform, and which may therefore be regarded as a sign or indication of divine presence and agency.

That a miracle is not any and every wonderful or even inexplicable thing, we need hardly pause to affirm.

<sup>1</sup> See note (A.) at the end of this Article.

All miracles are wonderful, but not all wonders are miracles. Everything is wonderful on its first occurrence. The first observation of an eclipse, of the eruption of a volcano, of an earthquake, or even a thunderstorm was, doubtless, very wonderful to the observers, and may very well have passed for something miraculous, as such events still do among the savage nations.

It is necessary to the idea of a miracle that the event should be not merely wonderful,<sup>1</sup> but that it occur not in the ordinary course of nature's operations ; that the power which produces it should be the special interposition of divine agency. This cannot be said of the eclipse, the storm, or the volcanic eruption. Such events, however remarkable, however fearful, and even unusual, they may be, are still within the range of natural causes, and to be accounted for on natural principles. But should the order of nature be reversed, or set aside ; should some event occur clearly beyond the power of natural causes to produce, and requiring, beyond reasonable doubt, the divine interposition and agency for its accomplishment, we should properly call such an event a miracle.

Now it may be difficult to decide, in many cases, what is, and what is not, a natural event ; whether a given result lies within or without the range of natural causes ; in other words, to prove a miracle. That is not now the point under discussion. All that we say is, that when it is once clearly settled that the phenomenon under consideration is not merely some wonderful and unusual, but still natural event, but, on the contrary, is really supernatural, and has been brought about by some special divine interposition, working to

<sup>1</sup> See note (B.) at the end of this Article.

accomplish this specific result; then, and not till then, are we warranted to call that event a miracle.

On the question whether a miracle involves a suspension or violation of the laws of nature, or is merely something above and beyond nature, there is room for greater difference of opinion. According to the definitions already given, the latter would seem to be all that is essential. On this point, however, theologians are by no means agreed.

Neander, in his chapter on Miracles,<sup>1</sup> says: "Although from their nature they transcend the ordinary law of cause and effect, they do not contradict it, inasmuch as nature has been so ordered by divine wisdom as to admit higher and creative agencies into her sphere; and it is perfectly natural that such powers, once admitted should produce effects beyond the scope of ordinary causes." Similar is the view of Olshausen,<sup>2</sup> who affirms "that we cannot adopt that idea of a miracle which regards it merely negatively as a suspension of the laws of nature. Starting from the scriptural view of the abiding presence of God in the world, we cannot regard the laws of nature as mechanical arrangements which would have to be altered by interpositions from without; they have the character of being based as a whole in God's nature. All phenomena, therefore, which are not explicable from the known or unknown laws of earthly development, are not, for that reason, necessarily violations of law, and suspensions of the laws of nature; rather they are themselves comprehended under a higher general law; for what is divine is truly according to law."

<sup>1</sup> Life of Christ, Book iv. Part ii. chap. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Commentary, Vol. i. p. 335, on Matt. viii. 1-4.

In like manner Trench: "But while the miracle is not thus nature, so neither is it against nature. That language, however commonly in use, is yet wholly unsatisfactory, which speaks of these wonderful works of God as violations of a natural law. *Beyond* nature, *beyond* and *above* the nature which we know, they are, but not *contrary* to it."<sup>1</sup>

To the same effect Augustine remarks: *Omnia portenta contra naturam dicimus esse, sed non sunt. . . . Portentum ergo fit non contra naturam, sed contra quam est nota natura.* And elsewhere he remarks: "*contra naturam non incongrue dicimus aliquid Deum facere, quod facit contra id quod novimus in natura.*" Augustine does not admit that anything comes to pass contrary to nature, since nature is but the will of God, and he cannot be supposed to act contrary to what he has himself established. "*Quomodo est enim contra naturam quod Dei fit voluntate, quum voluntas tanti utique creatoris, conditae rei cujusque natura sit?*"<sup>2</sup>

Aquinas gives a similar view; whatever is wrought by divine power, out of the usual course of nature, *praeter ordinem naturae*, is with him a miracle: "*Aliquid dicitur miraculum quod fit praeter ordinem totius naturae creatae, quo sensu solus Deus facit miracula.*"<sup>3</sup> Only it must be *totius naturae*, and not merely *naturae nobis notae*, of nature as known to us.

The following is the view of Knapp: "Properly speaking these miracles are wrought by God. In performing them he does not alter or disturb the course of things which he himself directs, or counteract the laws which he himself has established; but he ac-

<sup>1</sup> Notes on Miracles, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> De Civit. Dei. xxi. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Summa Theol., Lib. i. 110, Art. 4.

complies by means of nature, which he has thus constituted, and which he governs, something *more* than is common, and in connection with unusual circumstances." <sup>1</sup>

Prof. Tieftrunk, of Halle, holds the following language, as cited by Hahn: <sup>2</sup> "The supernatural cause which works a miracle, neither suspends nor confounds the laws of nature, but it uses the forms and materials of nature to accomplish its work. The miraculous consists not in being *contra-natural*, but *extra-natural*; for the producing cause effects its operation in the sensible world according to the laws of sensible nature; an operation which would not have taken place according to the ordinary course of nature, and could not have been produced by the mere causal powers of nature. The miraculous event may be compared to the unexpected entry of an independent activity into the course of nature, but which does not obstruct nor subvert it; only we must observe that this entry and its operation do not take place by any mere natural casuality, but by a superior power acting according to the laws of sensible nature."

On the contrary, Wegscheider <sup>3</sup> defines miracles as unusual events, wrought by a cause superior to human power, and suspending the ordinary course of nature and its laws; "*humanas vires superantes, et rerum naturae cursum consuetum, legesque in officiando ejusmodi eventu tollentes.*" Nor is he without authority for this. Among the Lutheran divines, Quenstedt <sup>4</sup> affirms: "*Miracula vero et proprie dicta sunt, quae contra vim rebus naturalibus a Deo inditam, cursumque*

<sup>1</sup> Theology, Vol. i. p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> Institutiones, p. 178

<sup>3</sup> Jahrbuch des Christ. Glaub.

<sup>4</sup> Theologia Didactico-Polemica.



naturalem, sive per extraordinariam Dei potentiam efficiuntur." So also Buddeus<sup>1</sup> (as cited by Knapp) speaks of miracles as "operationes quibus naturae leges ad ordinem et conservationem totius hujus universi spectantes, re vera suspenduntur."

Indeed, this would seem to have been the view very generally entertained by the earlier theological writers, as it is undoubtedly that of many among the moderns.

We are by no means sure, however, that a miracle involves, of necessity, any violation or suspension of the laws of nature. That which is *above* nature is not necessarily *contrary* to nature. A work may be wrought by divine power, and that power may be extraordinary in its nature and operation, and so the effect may lie quite without the sphere of nature's laws and the usual course of things; and yet it may involve no contradiction or suspension of any of those laws. A higher power may come in to accomplish a special result on a special occasion, yet leave the ordinary and established laws in full force. It is a law of nature that bodies of a certain specific gravity shall fall to the earth when left unsupported in the air or the water; yet a stone, or a ball of iron, may be projected with such force as to counteract this tendency; it may ascend, instead of descend, and so continue until it passes out of sight. The law, however, still exists, still acts,—acts upon this very projectile, and that with its full force. The gravitating power is neither abolished nor suspended, as regards that missile, but only *counteracted* by another and superior force. The usual effect is set aside for the time by the intermission of a higher power. In like manner, when the iron

<sup>1</sup> *Institutiones Theol. Dogmat.*, p. 245.

swims, or the water burns; when the flames fail to consume, or the wild beasts to devour; when the raging tempest suddenly becomes a calm, or even death itself gives place to life, there may be in all this no violation or suspension of nature's laws, but only the coming in of a higher power to prevent the ordinary, and produce an extraordinary result—a counteraction, rather than a contradiction.<sup>1</sup>

Who will say that it may not be so? All that is essential to the idea of a miracle is the intervention of divine power to accomplish by supernatural means, whether directly or indirectly, a result not to be attained in the ordinary course of nature. But what is above and beyond nature is not necessarily contrary to it. That iron should swim may be extra-natural, super-natural, yet not contra-natural. Nay, there may possibly be, as some suppose, even within the sphere of nature itself, a power hitherto unknown, sufficient to produce that unusual result, requiring only to be called into exercise by the divine will when the special occasion demands; and the result would be none the less a miracle, since it is the effect of special divine interposition, and is something beyond the usual course of nature. But whether the means employed are natural or supernatural, in either case the efficient cause is supernatural, and the event miraculous; nor is there in either case, any necessary violation or suspension of the already-existing and established laws. Those laws may remain in full force, notwithstanding the coming in of this higher power.

And so of the still more remarkable exertions of divine power, as, for example, the restoration of a

<sup>1</sup> See note (C.) at the end of this Article.

dead man to life. It is certainly not according to the usual course of events, and in this sense not according to the laws of nature, that a dead body should be restored to life. We know of no power in nature adequate to produce this result. When such an event really occurs, therefore, we are warranted to infer divine interposition, and to pronounce the effect a miracle. But do we know that any of the existing laws of nature forbid such a result, and must be first abolished, or set aside, before this event can take place? Want of power is one thing, and opposition is another. Inability is not incompatibility. The power to restore life may not be in nature, and yet may not be contrary to nature.<sup>1</sup>

A law, in the sense in which that term is here used, is simply *an established mode of operation*. A law of nature is simply *such a mode of operation as results from the nature, or constitution*, of things about us in the physical world. Now if an event takes place by some other mode of operation than that now defined, that is, by some mode of operation that does not result from the original constitution of things, the latter is not necessarily a violation of the former nor a suspension of it. For example: The change of water into wine, by an instantaneous process, certainly is not the result of the original constitution of things in the physical world. It is not the way in which nature produces wine. But is it, on the other hand, a violation of that method? Nature, that is, Deity, operating in the accustomed manner, and according to the original constitution of things, produces wine by the processes of growth and fermentation. *Now*, he produces it

<sup>1</sup> See note (D.) at the end of this Article.

directly, without this mediate process. Is there any contradiction here of the former method? Is there any suspension of it, even? Are not the laws and processes of nature still in force, as before? Are not vines still bearing fruit, and grapes still yielding wine, just as ever? The truth is, no law is violated, none suspended; only another force is called into requisition in addition to the usual forces of nature; or rather, the power, which usually operates in such or such a prescribed mode, now, for special reasons, and for the moment, acts in another and quite unusual mode. It is simply Deity doing, at one time, in one way, what at other times, and usually, he does in another way. The result is something which we cannot account for by the laws of nature, inasmuch as it was not produced by the operation of those laws; in other words, it is a miracle. But in thus operating by a new method to accomplish a special end, Deity no more contradicts or violates his usual mode of operation than a man's travelling by steam-car contradicts his usual and slower mode of procedure by stage-coach, or than the appearance of a comet contradicts the established order of the solar system, or suspends the laws of planetary motion. The fact that God usually works in a given way does not prove that he never works in any other. Show any sufficient reason for a departure from the usual method, and such departure becomes not merely possible, but in the highest degree probable. There will be *deviation*, but not *contradiction*.

The view now taken of the nature of a miracle obviates an objection frequently urged against the argument from miracles in favor of Christianity, to wit, that they imply a contradiction or violation of the laws

of nature.<sup>1</sup> Those laws, it is said, are universal and invariable; and whatever occurrence professes to be a contradiction of those immutable laws bears on its face the evidence of its own absurdity and falsity. Now if it can be shown that a miracle does not of necessity imply any such contradiction or violation of natural laws — that, on the contrary, it leaves those laws in full force and play, while it comes in beside them, and reaches beyond them, to bring about results which are not in their sphere, which lie out of their plane — it is certainly a point gained and a difficulty met.

The case is analogous to the reasoning of the sceptic against the mysteries of the Christian faith, that they are contrary to reason, and therefore incredible. To which we reply: No, not *contrary* to reason, but merely *above* reason. So we would say of miracles; they are not contrary to nature, but above nature.

But is a miracle a *lawless* thing? Or may there be, on the other hand, a law of miracles? Does the divine interposition which produces a miraculous event occur at hap-hazard, or according to fixed and uniform principles? May there not be as close a connection between the peculiar circumstances which call for and demand the supernatural, and the divine interposition to meet the exigency, as there is between any ordinary result and the law of nature which looks to its accomplishment? Doubtless there may be such a connection, such a law of miracles. We are not to suppose that the laws of nature comprehend *all* laws. Could we see far enough into the nature of things, we might perhaps discover a fixed and invariable connection between the *occasion for* and the *occurrence of* a

<sup>1</sup> See note (E.) at the end of this Article.

miracle ; so that we could say : Given, such and such things ; and given, also, divine interposition to meet the case. This we do not know enough to affirm, perhaps never shall ; neither, on the other hand, does any man know enough to deny it.

Much less are we to conceive of a miracle as an event without *cause*. Whether there be or be not any such thing as a law of miracles, there is and must be a *cause* of them. If natural events require a cause, much more supernatural. We are not to think of natural causes as comprehending *all* causes. Because a thing is beyond the range of ordinary and natural causes, it does not follow that it is beyond the range of all cause. To suppose that there is no cause except natural causes is not pantheism merely, it is downright atheism. It is to shut God out of the universe which he has himself created.

To sum up what has been said. We are not to conceive of a miracle as simply any remarkable or extraordinary event, nor yet as of necessity a contradiction, or even suspension, of any law of nature ; we are not to conceive of it as necessarily a lawless occurrence, much less uncaused ; but rather, and simply, as a divine interposition to accomplish by supernatural agency a specific end not otherwise attainable.

With these remarks on the *nature* of miracles, we proceed to the second topic of investigation.

## II. WHAT PROVES A MIRACLE ?

In other words, what kind and degree of evidence is required in order to prove that divine power is in any case interposed to produce a given effect, otherwise than by natural causes ? And here we are met



at the outset by the positive denial that any amount of evidence can prove it — the denial, in a word, that a miracle is a possible thing. Thus, in the article on the Evidences of Christianity, in the “Essays and Reviews,” Baden Powell holds the following language: “What is alleged is a case of the supernatural; but no testimony can reach to the supernatural; testimony can apply only to apparent sensible facts; testimony can only prove an extraordinary and perhaps inexplicable occurrence, a phenomenon. That it is due to supernatural causes is entirely dependent on the previous belief or assumptions of the parties.”<sup>1</sup> Again, we are told, by the same author, that “In nature, and from nature, by science and by reason, we neither have, nor can possibly have, any evidence of a *Deity working miracles*; for that we must go out of nature and beyond reason. If we could have any such evidence *from nature*, it could only prove extraordinary *natural* effects, which would not be *miracles* in the old theological sense, as isolated, unrelated, and uncaused; whereas no *physical* fact can be conceived as unique, or without analogy and relation to others and to the whole system of natural causes.”<sup>2</sup>

In the same strain we are complacently informed by the same authority, that in the present age of physical research, “all highly cultivated minds and duly advanced intellects have imbibed more or less the lessons of inductive philosophy, and have, at least in some measure, learned to appreciate the grand conception of universal law; to recognize the impossibility even of *any two material atoms* subsisting together without a determinate relation; of any action of the one on the

<sup>1</sup> Recent Inquiries, etc., p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 160.

other, whether of equilibrium or of motion, without reference to a physical cause; of any modification whatsoever in the existing conditions of material agents, unless through the *invariable operation of a series of eternally impressed consequences* [the italics are ours] following in some necessary chain of orderly connection, however imperfectly known to us." <sup>1</sup>

Any interference with the established order of nature being thus assumed as a physical impossibility, which no amount of evidence can establish, we are not surprised to be told in this connection, that "if miracles were in the estimation of a former age among the chief *supports* of Christianity, they are at present among the main *difficulties* and hinderances to its acceptance." <sup>2</sup>

As regards the utter impossibility of miracles, on the ground of the absolute inviolability of nature's laws, and the invariability and universality of their operation, we fear we must confess ourselves not of that order of "highly cultivated minds and duly advanced intellects" that "have learned to appreciate the grand conception." The real question for a mind thus far advanced, as it seems to us, is this: *Is there a Deity at all?* Or is all power to be resolved into this great system of universal, invariable, eternal law — this grand machinery of "eternally impressed consequences," that goes grinding and clanking on from eternity to eternity? If the latter, then we grant that miracles are out of the question. But *if there be a God*, as some of us in our simplicity have supposed; if we may crave the indulgence of this highly cultivated age so far as to be permitted to retain the antiquated notion of a Deity at the head of affairs; and if we place this Deity, where he belongs,

<sup>1</sup> Recent Inquiries, p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 158.

behind all those laws and above them all, as their source and spring, then why may not the power that usually works in and by such and such methods or laws, if occasion require, act in some other way, without or above those laws? Nay, why may he not, if necessary to the accomplishment of his purposes, even reverse or wholly set aside for the time, those usual methods of procedure which we call laws of nature? It would seem reasonable to suppose this. The power that created and established certain laws and operations of nature, so called, can surely, if he pleases, suspend those operations and counteract those laws, by bringing in still higher forces on special occasions and for special purposes. The laws are surely not so invariable and inviolable as to be beyond the reach of their Maker; the sublime machinery of eternally impressed consequences is not so unvarying and irresistible in its steady revolutions, but that the hand which created and set it agoing can vary or suspend its movements at will. The question now is, not whether Deity *will* do this, or whether he is *likely* to do it, but whether he *can*. If he can, then miracles are not *impossible*.<sup>1</sup>

The truth is, no consistent theist can possibly maintain such a position. The real question, when it comes to that pass, as we said before, is simply this: *Are we atheists, or have we still a God?* And he who coolly shuts the door in the face of Deity, and shuts him out of his own creation, by assuming that nature's laws are absolutely invariable, universal, and eternal, and therefore any departure from them is impossible, under whatever cloak of science or inductive philosophy he may hide himself, is logically and practically an atheist.

<sup>1</sup> See note (F.) at the end of this Article.

But granting that a miracle is not impossible, still, is it not in the highest degree *improbable* — so much so that no amount of evidence is sufficient to establish the fact of its occurrence? That depends on circumstances, on the end to be accomplished, on the *reason for* the thing. Not under all circumstances and on all occasions is a miracle improbable even. We can suppose cases in which such an occurrence would be highly probable. If the occasion, the end to be accomplished, be something extraordinary and of unusual moment, especially if it be something not likely to be attained by ordinary methods, it is not in such a case *a priori* improbable that extraordinary means may be employed to effect that end.

Suppose, for example, that it were proposed to make a divine revelation to man of truths not to be learned from nature — a case certainly supposable — how can this be done, save in some way beyond and above the ordinary course of nature's operations? Such a revelation will be in itself a miracle in the highest sense;<sup>1</sup> and therefore there is no improbability that the mode of its communication may be something miraculous. Or suppose — the greatest of all mysteries and miracles — that God himself should see fit to become incarnate, is it improbable that a lesser and subordinate miracle should be wrought to accomplish this incarnation?

But even supposing a miracle were wrought, is it possible to establish the fact by evidence? Is a miracle capable of proof? No, says Powell, for it is either *within* nature, and so is really not a miracle at all;

<sup>1</sup> As Olshausen has well remarked respecting Christ: "He *himself* was the wonder (*τέρας*); his wonderful works were but the natural acts of his being." — Com. i. p. 835.

or it is *beyond* nature, and so beyond the range of evidence and within the domain of faith. No, says Hume, for it is contrary to human experience, and therefore incredible. No, says Strauss, for the case is insupposable; a miracle is an impossibility; the inviolability of the chain of second causes is a self-evident truth, and no amount of evidence is sufficient to set aside such a truth.

This latter position we have already sufficiently considered. It is a position which only the atheist can consistently hold. Nor is it to be admitted as a self-evident truth that the laws of nature *are* inviolable and invariable. We demand proof of this. It is a position assumed by Strauss and those who agree with him, but nowhere proved. So far from being a self-evident truth, it is not a truth, at all. The power that makes can unmake, vary, suspend. Nor even if this were so, would it render miracles impossible, since, as we have already shown, a miracle does not of necessity imply any contradiction or violation of natural law.

The position of Hume, that a miracle is contrary to human experience, and therefore incredible, deserves a more careful consideration than it has in all cases received from those who have undertaken to answer it. We do not propose here to discuss the matter in all its bearings; it is sufficient to our present purpose to say that neither the major nor minor premise of this argument is admissible. It is not true, as the minor premise asserts, that miracles are contrary to *all* human experience. This is assumed, and it is an assumption which begs the whole question in dispute. That miracles are contrary to *general* experience is very true; else they would not be miracles. That they are con-

trary to *all* human experience, we deny. So far from this, if we may believe anything which does not fall under our own immediate observation, instances of divine interposition have been occurring from time to time, along a large part of the course of human history. It is beyond all reasonable doubt that such instances occurred in connection with the promulgation both of the Jewish, and afterward of the Christian systems. Just where it would be, *a priori*, probable that they would occur; just where they were needed to give authority to a religious system purporting to be of divine origin; just where we should reasonably expect to find them if such things ever do occur, just there we meet with them. The facts are well attested and unquestionable. The statements clear, full, explicit. The instances, though rare, yet, in the aggregate, are numerous. The witnesses are many. They were men of honesty and sobriety, of good character and good sense. They testify to plain facts, about which there could well be no mistake. They appeal to their contemporaries for the truth of their statements; and that testimony goes uncontradicted, nay, is confirmed, by their enemies. There can be no reasonable doubt that the remarkable events to which they testify did really occur; and as little doubt that the occurrences in question were such as come under our definition of a miracle. They are such as certainly do not occur in the ordinary course of nature, inexplicable by any known laws and forces, to be accounted for only by admitting special divine interposition.

Now it is quite too late, in the face of all these facts, for the sceptic to come in with the cool assumption that miracles are contrary to human experience. They



may be contrary to *his* experience and to ours; but why should we set up our individual experience against that of all past ages and of so many witnesses. The fact that Mr. Hume, or any number of men, did not see a miracle does not prove that nobody has ever seen one. Mere negative testimony cannot outweigh positive. At all events, it is a sheer begging of the question for any man to assert that miracles are contrary to human experience, when so many witnesses testify positively to the occurrence under their own observation of events which, if they really did occur as stated, must be admitted to be miraculous.

Nor is the major premise of Mr. Hume's argument tenable. It is not true that whatever is contrary to human experience is, on that account, and of necessity, incredible. An event is not necessarily incredible because not known to have occurred before. Is it quite certain that nothing can take place in the world which has not already taken place? Can nothing occur for the first time? If nothing miraculous had ever occurred in the whole history of our world previous to the introduction of Christianity, it would not follow that some events of that sort might not then occur, or that they would be altogether incredible if they should occur. Even if it were conceded, then, as it is not, that miracles are contrary to human experience, it by no means follows that they are on that account necessarily incredible.

But what shall we say to the position of Baden Powell, that a miracle is incapable of proof because *in and from* nature there can be no evidence of the supernatural, while that which is beyond and above nature is beyond the domain of reason, and ceases to be

capable of investigation, but must be received by faith?

True, we reply, that which is *from* nature, that is, produced by natural causes, cannot be supernatural; but not true that *in* nature, that is, within the limits and domain of nature, there can be no occurrence of the supernatural—not true that God cannot, if he pleases, work a miracle *in* nature, that is, among material, sensible things.<sup>1</sup> This point we have already sufficiently discussed. Nor is it true that whatever is beyond the power of natural causes to produce is therefore beyond the domain of reason to investigate, and must be received, if at all, only by a blind and unquestioning faith. That is not for a moment to be conceded. That which is extra-natural is not of necessity incapable of proof. The question whether a dead man was on a certain occasion restored to life is a question to be settled wholly by evidence and the investigation of reason. If the event *did* occur, clearly it was supernatural; the laws and forces of nature are not adequate to produce such a result. But *did* it occur? That is the real question; and it is a question which falls as clearly and fully within the range of rational investigation and the laws of evidence as any question of physical science.

Let us take a given case—the raising of Lazarus from the grave. Two inquiries at once arise: 1. Are the facts as here stated? Did these things actually occur? Was the man dead, and was he subsequently restored to life, according to the statement? 2. If so, was the event miraculous?

As to the latter, there can be no reasonable doubt.

<sup>1</sup> See note (G.) at the end of this Article.

If the man Lazarus was actually raised from the dead, it was a supernatural event. It is not in the course of nature's operations for dead men to come out of their graves, and resume the functions of life. Her laws are not to that effect. It is well remarked by Dr. Taylor, that it is as much a law of nature that a dead man shall *stay* dead, as that a living man shall die when pierced through the heart. As to the other point, it is clearly a question which admits of evidence, and must be settled just as all questions concerning matters of fact are settled, to wit, by the testimony of credible witnesses. But hold, says Mr. Powell; no testimony is sufficient to prove what is contrary to the course and order of nature. We take issue with him there. The testimony of competent and credible witnesses is capable of proving *any matter of fact*, any occurrence or event, as also of disproving it. The question being: Did this thing really occur? Did this man, after he had lain three days in his grave, actually come out of it, at the word of command, and return to his home a living man? The testimony of witnesses is adequate to decide that point. The question is not now as to the *cause* of the event,—how it happened,—but *did* it happen at all? And this is a question which men of common powers of observation and common honesty are capable of answering.

So of the other miracles of Scripture. If the facts occurred as there stated, they are, in many cases at least, such as to leave no doubt of their being supernatural occurrences; and they are, moreover, such things as make it easy to decide whether they did or did not really occur.

But the so-called miracles, we are told, are, after

all, mere myths, fables, illusions. They never, in fact, occurred as narrated. The witnesses are, if not imposing on others, at least themselves imposed upon. So Strauss. This is, of course, supposable; but is it probable? That the witnesses should invent a story utterly without foundation, and palm it off as reality upon those who must have known whether the events in question occurred or not, and who would at once have contradicted the statement had it been untrue,—this, surely, is out of the question. On the other hand, that the witnesses, in common with all who were spectators of the scene, were deceived and imposed upon by mere illusions of the senses is hardly more credible. For the acts were performed publicly, in open day, and before the most prejudiced eyes. They were of such a nature that nothing would have been easier than to detect the imposition, if there were any. Take, for example, the raising of Lazarus, or the healing of the lame man at the temple gate by Peter and John. The observers must have known whether such things really occurred or not—whether they were facts or illusions. They were not predisposed to believe, but on the contrary to reject; the evidence of anything supernatural in the case. They had every motive to do so, but were unable. “What shall we do to these men? For that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem, and *we cannot deny it*,” said the sorely perplexed rulers. If there had been any reason to suspect imposition or jugglery, strange that such men should not have made the most of it.<sup>1</sup>

Evidently two courses, and only two, are open to

<sup>1</sup> See note (H.) at the end of this Article.

him who undertakes to discredit or disprove the miracles of Scripture. He must show that the events narrated did not take place, or else that they were not miraculous. The first is simply a question of fact—Did such and such things happen? Was the man really dead, or really a cripple, and was he really restored in the manner stated? Now we maintain that on any question of fact of this nature the testimony of good and reliable witnesses—honest men, possessing ordinary powers of observation, and placed in such circumstances as to be able to observe whatever occurred—is perfectly valid evidence. The question for them to decide is not whether the thing is a miracle,—that is a matter of judgment which every man must decide for himself,—but did the thing actually happen? This it may not always be easy to determine. But when the acts in question are performed publicly, in the sight of all men, without attempt at secrecy or jugglery; when they are of such a nature, moreover, as renders imposition and deception out of the question—as in the case of Lazarus, of the widow's son, of the lame man at the temple gate, of the man born blind, and a multitude of other cases,—it is easy for any man on the spot to satisfy himself whether such things were or were not done. And if he be a man of good character for honesty and veracity, his testimony as to the simple matter of fact—what he saw and heard, what he knew of the previous condition of the person thus restored, and of the change in that condition, and the manner in which that change occurred—is perfectly valid testimony, and would be so taken in any court of justice in the world.

The case is still stronger when we can summon

upon the stand, as witnesses of the fact, men who have the deepest interest in denying the whole transaction, if it were possible for them to do so; but whose reluctant testimony goes to confirm the actual occurrence of the events in question. And this is precisely the case, in many instances, with regard to the miracles of Scripture.

We hear much of the fallibility of human testimony. You cannot rely upon it, says Hume. Men often deceive, are often mistaken and incorrect in their statements. It is more reasonable that something of this sort has happened in any given case, than that the laws of nature are reversed, or her uniformity disturbed. That, we reply, depends on circumstances. In the cases now under consideration, it is certainly more reasonable to suppose that the facts occurred as stated, than that so many men should testify to their occurrence under their own observation, and that, too, when in many cases they had the strongest motive for denying and contradicting the whole story, and yet all prove to be either false or incorrect in the statements.

Laplace has shown, indeed, that evidence diminishes rapidly in passing through successive hands; so that even supposing each witness to speak the truth nine times out of ten, by the time it has passed through twenty hands the chances that the last or twentieth witness speaks the truth are less than one in eight. To this it is sufficient to reply that, as regards the cases under consideration, — and the same may be said of the Scripture miracles generally, — we have our testimony, not from the twentieth hand, or even at second hand, but from eye-witnesses themselves, who speak what they do know, and testify what they have seen.



And here we cannot but inquire whether the case would be on the whole materially altered if, in place of the testimony of others to the occurrence of a miracle, under circumstances the most favorable to honesty, and also to accuracy on the part of the witness, we had the testimony of *our own senses*. Suppose we ourselves were observers of the whole transaction,—the question being still, as before, not, Was the affair a miracle? but only, Did such and such a thing take place? Was the dead man restored to life? Was the lame man healed?—have we now the means of deciding this question with any more certainty than before? True, we have now the testimony of our own eyes, instead of those of others. But are we less liable to be mistaken or deceived in regard to a simple matter of observation than are other people under the same circumstances? Are our eyes more reliable than other eyes, our senses than other men's senses, our judgment as to what it is that we see and hear than other people's judgments as to the same thing? Have we never found ourselves mistaken as to what we thought we had observed? Would our testimony that we had ourselves seen and heard such and such things pass for more, in a court of justice, than the same testimony from any other honest and competent witness in the same circumstances?

Indeed, Mr. Powell admits that the evidence of our own senses can no more prove a miracle than the testimony of other witnesses. "The essential question of miracles stands quite apart from any consideration of *testimony*. The question would remain the same if we had the evidence of our own senses to an alleged miracle, that is, to an extraordinary or inexplicable

fact. It is not the *mere fact*, but the *cause* or *explanation* of it, which is the point at issue."<sup>1</sup>

True, we reply, the cause or explanation of the fact is a point at issue; but so, also, is the *fact itself* — that first and chiefly; and till that is settled the other is of no consequence. Did this event really occur? is our first question. Once satisfied of that, we may then inquire: Was the thing a miracle? Now it is to the decision of this first question that we call in the testimony of competent and reliable witnesses as a perfectly valid source of evidence; and we maintain that a case may easily be conceived in which such testimony shall be equally conclusive of the fact with our own personal observation.

It is worthy of remark that the two questions, Did the thing actually occur? and if so, was it a miracle? stand to each other in a certain fixed relation. The more extraordinary and improbable the event, and therefore the more unlikely to have occurred, the greater the probability that if it did occur it was miraculous. On the other hand, the less extraordinary and improbable the event in question, so much the less evidence is required to establish the fact of its occurrence; while, at the same time, so much the more difficult is it to show that the thing was a miracle.

The case hitherto supposed — the raising of the dead — is clearly of the former class. Let us now suppose an instance of the latter — an event not in itself wholly improbable, and to which the testimony is conclusive, but with respect to which the real question is: Was the thing a miracle, or was it the effect of natural causes? The restoration of sight to the blind by a

<sup>1</sup> Recent Inquiries, p. 159.

word; the healing of the sick, without the use of natural remedies, by the mere touch of the hand, or even of the hem of a garment, or of the shadow of a person passing by; the walking on the water without special mechanical appliances of any sort; the calming a tempest by simple word of command — these and the like may fall, perhaps, under that category. There may be cases, doubtless, of this sort, where it will be difficult to decide whether the event in question is really miraculous. Still, if, as in the cases supposed, the effect produced be such as is not produced by any known physical law, such as lies not within the sphere of nature's ordinary operations, or even, so far as we know, of her operations at all; if, in addition to this, there be a direct claim of supernatural agency in the case; and further, if the occasion, the object, or end to be attained be such as appears to require some supernatural agency, the probability would seem, in view of all the circumstances, to be very strong that the event in question was brought about by some power above nature. Testimony, it will be observed, is not brought into the case to establish the *miraculous character* of the event, but only to establish the *fact* of its occurrence. To that it is perfectly competent. That once settled, it is for us to decide by the exercise of our own reason and judgment whether the occurrence be the result of natural causes or not.

But here we are met by the objection of Rousseau, that it is impossible to prove a miracle, because miracles are exceptions to the laws of nature, and we do not know enough of nature to decide in all cases what her laws are. It is true, we reply, that we do not know *all* the laws of nature. But we know what is

the ordinary course and order of her operations ; and when an event so far transcends these as to be altogether inexplicable by any natural cause known to us ; when it is a thing the like of which was never known to occur under the like circumstances ; when, moreover, the immediate producing cause claims to be supernatural, and the object is one that might well demand such agency, we are warranted in presuming the exertion of a power above and beyond nature. We grant that the mere fact of our inability to account for a phenomenon does not prove it to be a miracle ; for there may be laws of nature of which we are ignorant, and of which this may be the result. But when the unusual and inexplicable event occurs in connection with circumstances that are themselves peculiar, and that would render the exertion of special divine agency not in itself an improbable thing, in such cases the conclusion is certainly a just and reasonable one, that the event in question is the result of such interposition, in other words, a miracle.

And here we cannot but remark that the very uniformity of nature, on which so much stress is laid by those who deny the possibility of miracles, itself leads rather to the opposite conclusion in certain cases. Nature's operations are uniform and unvarying. We can calculate upon their occurrence with reasonable certainty. But here comes an effect quite at variance with all our previous notions and experience of those operations. May it not be the result of some power working above and beyond nature ? Either this, or else nature is not, as we thought, uniform. Which of the two is the more probable ?

It is time to pass to other topics ; but we cannot

dismiss the question now before us without adverting to a point which deserves the consideration of writers on miracles. It is this: How far is the character of the *doctrine*, in confirmation of which miracles profess to be wrought, to be admitted as evidence of the miracles themselves? Can we appeal to the character of the doctrine in proof of the miracle? This is not unfrequently done. But if the divinity of the system prove the miracle, we cannot, of course, afterward appeal to the miracle to prove, in its turn, the divinity of the system, since this would be to reason in a circle. On the other hand, we cannot, perhaps, satisfactorily establish the reality of a miracle, entirely irrespective of the character of the system in favor of which that miracle professes to be wrought. If the system is manifestly false and pernicious, if the doctrine is at variance with the plainest principles of morality and true religion — this of itself is sufficient to discredit the reality of the supposed miracle. Reason assures us that God would not work miracles in favor of such a system. On the whole, the argument from the character of the doctrine seems to be negative rather than positive. If the system be such as to make a divine origin not improbable, this removes an objection that would otherwise lie against the supposition of a miracle in its behalf. It does not of itself prove that a miracle was wrought.

To sum up what has been said: In reply to the question, What *proves* a miracle? we take the following positions:

A miracle is possible.

Not under all circumstances improbable even.

On the contrary, under certain circumstances, may be highly probable.

The testimony of witnesses to the occurrence of a miracle, under such circumstances, is valid and reliable proof.

In other words, miracles are neither impossible to occur, nor impossible to be proved. The *reality* of the event is capable of proof by testimony; the *miraculous character* of the event is a matter which reason and the common sense of men, in view of all the circumstances of the case, is competent to decide.

We proceed to the consideration of the remaining question.

### III. WHAT DOES A MIRACLE PROVE?

What the value and significance of it? What place shall we assign it in the scale of evidence, and what weight allow it? Does it, in fact, prove anything? If so, what? If it were once of value at the time of its occurrence, has it not lost its evidential force in the lapse of time, so as to be no longer of service, but rather even to hang a mere dead weight on the system that is compelled to carry it? These are questions of much moment, and the present age is called to meet them fully and fearlessly.

There can be no question that there has been of late a marked and increasing tendency on the part of the cultivated, and especially the scientific, mind of the age, to look with less favor than formerly upon the external evidences of Christianity, and particularly to disparage the evidence from miracles. It is contended by many that Christianity carries its own evidence with it, in the simplicity and purity of its doctrine, and in its power to elevate the character and reform the life. This intrinsic and internal is the *real* evidence, we are told — all that it needs. Thus Coleridge, who even



goes so far as emphatically to protest against bringing miracles to prove a religious truth, the belief of which should be voluntary, and not compulsory, with the understanding. In the same strain Mr. Newman, in his *Phases of Faith*, maintains that external testimony should not be allowed to overrule the internal convictions of the mind, and that no moral truth ought to be received in mere obedience to a miracle of sense. Of those who would thus discard almost entirely the external evidences of Christianity and the evidential force of miracles, some are among the zealous supporters of the Christian doctrine in its purest form, while others belong to an entirely different class. The rationalistic theologians of Germany, as represented by Wegscheider, De Wette, and others of that school, take the same view; while of the Lutheran school Döderlein hesitates not to affirm that the truth of the doctrine does not depend on the miracles, but we must be convinced of it on its internal evidence. Others, again, as Paulus and Rosenmüller, while they would allow a certain degree of evidential force to miracles on their first occurrence, deny that they are of any value at the present day.

Of those, on the other hand, who would still assign to the argument from miracles an important place among the evidences of Christianity, there are many who, instead of making this the sole criterion of a divine revelation, would receive it as of force only in connection with the internal evidence derived from the moral character of the doctrine, and of the general system in confirmation of which the miracles were wrought. This is, in fact, the view now, perhaps, more generally held by orthodox divines. It is the position maintained by Dr. Samuel Clarke, in his *Evi-*

dences of Natural and Revealed Religion ; and also by Trench, in his Notes on Miracles. Similar is the view of Neander, who holds that miracles are not to be considered by themselves, as isolated facts, but only as a part of, and in close connection with, the whole self-revelation of God to man.<sup>1</sup>

As regards the general value and use of miracles, it is difficult to see how in any other way a revelation of divine truth could, in the first instance, be substantiated. In no other way, so far as we can see, can the *divine authority* of the teachers who proclaim such a revelation be established.

He who comes with a claim to divine commission and authority is bound to make good that claim, — to show good and sufficient reason for it, — else we shall not believe him. We have a right to demand such evidence. How, then, shall he show this? What shall be his token or sign that God speaks in and through him, and that the doctrine which he sets forth is not only truth, but truth divinely uttered? If now miracles are wrought in attestation of that authority; if there is manifestly some divine interposition in the case, and not merely a pretence of such interposition; once satisfied of that fact, and that there is no deception in the matter, we cannot but admit that the claim is sustained. The man comes before us with a claim to divine authority, and appeals to the divine omnipotence to establish that claim. The appeal is sustained. Works which are beyond the course of nature, and

<sup>1</sup> So *Gerhard* (as cited by Trench), who even goes so far as to say: "miracula sunt doctrinae tesserae, ac sigilla; quemadmodum igitur sigillum a literis avulsum nihil probat, ita quoque miracula sine doctrinâ nihil valent." — *Loc. Theol.*, loc. 28, c. 11.

which only divine power can accomplish, are wrought in confirmation of the claim and of the doctrine. It cannot be that God would interpose in behalf of imposition and a lie. It must be, therefore, that the man and the doctrine are, as they profess to be, from God.

Now this is precisely the case with the first teachers of Christianity. They appeal to their works as evidence of their divine commission and authority. So did Christ himself. He expressly places his claim on this very ground. "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. There is another that beareth witness of me. . . . . Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. . . . . But I have greater witness than that of John; for the *works* which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me."<sup>1</sup> And again, on another occasion: "If I do not the *works* of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, *though ye believe not me, believe the works*; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him."<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, we find the Jews themselves acknowledging the justness and force of this principle. "Rabbi," says Nicodemus, "we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."<sup>3</sup> "And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, *will he do more miracles* than these which this man hath done?"<sup>4</sup> So the man who was restored to sight: "Why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God hear-

<sup>1</sup> John v. 31-33, 36.

<sup>2</sup> John iii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> John x. 37, 38.

<sup>4</sup> John vii. 81.

eth not sinners. . . . . *If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.*"<sup>1</sup>

In like manner the disciples, wherever they proclaim the doctrines of the new religion, are able to appeal to the miraculous powers conferred upon them as evidences of their divine commission; and that not without success. Great fear, we are told, falls upon all, in view of the signs and wonders wrought by them, and multitudes, in consequence, are added to the number of believers. Now this is precisely what we might expect in such a case; nor is it possible to see how in any other way the claims of the new system and of its teachers could possibly have been substantiated.

It is objected by those who would place the evidence of the Christian system upon the internal rather than the external ground, that the miracles of our Saviour and his apostles cannot possibly be regarded as substantiating their doctrine, or even their mission, inasmuch as miracles are sometimes wrought by bad men and deceivers; and if we admit the force of the argument in the one case, we must also in the other. We fear that too much has been conceded to the enemies of Christianity by some of its best friends and advocates in respect to this matter. Thus Olshausen<sup>2</sup> affirms "that the Scriptures assert not merely holy, but also evil, power to be the cause of miracles," and that, in fact, "two series of miracles extend throughout scripture history"; and refers us in proof to the works of the Egyptian magicians, as opposed to those of Moses, and also to the signs and wonders which false prophets and which anti-christs are said in Scripture to be able to make use of, in order to deceive, if possible, the

<sup>1</sup> John ix. 30, 31, 33.

<sup>2</sup> Commentary, Vol. i. p. 336.

very elect. And we regret to find that so able and judicious a writer as Trench, whose Notes on Miracles blend so happily the true scholarly with the true Christian spirit, has but too closely followed the less reliable German in this view. "This fact," he says, "that the kingdom of lies has its wonders, no less than the kingdom of truth, would alone be sufficient to convince us that miracles cannot be appealed to absolutely and simply in proof of the doctrine which the worker of them proclaims; and God's word expressly declares the same (Deut. xii. 1-5). A miracle does not prove the truth of a doctrine, or the divine mission of him that brings it to pass."<sup>1</sup>

But *do* the Scriptures present two independent lines of miracles running parallel with each other,—those of the kingdom of light and those of the opposite kingdom,—as Olshausen affirms, and as Trench seems to admit? Do they anywhere assert or imply that evil power is ever the efficient producing cause of a miracle, or that the wonders performed by evil men are *real* miracles? These wonders are examples of the mirabile; but are they examples of the miraculum? They were wrought for the *purpose of convincing*, and hence not improperly are termed *σημεῖα*; but were they real miracles, or only false and deceptive appearances? Now it seems to us they are clearly of the latter sort, and that this is plainly implied in the scripture narratives. The works of the magicians are expressly ascribed to the power of their *enchantments*. They were the tricks of conjurers, hardly more remarkable than many of the wonders performed at this day by the skilful jugglers of Egypt and India. As to the signs

<sup>1</sup> Notes on Miracles, p. 27.

wrought by the false prophets, the same may be said; while those of antichrist are expressly termed *false* or *lying* wonders.<sup>1</sup> There is no evidence that any of these were miracles, save in appearance only; nor is there any evidence from Scripture that either bad men or devils have in any instance performed miracles, except as mere instruments of divine power.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, Olshausen himself, in his commentary on the passage last referred to (2 Thess. ii. 9), expressly admits that, "as Satan himself is a created being, although a *mighty* one, the wonders also which he performs through antichrist can be merely *mirabilia*, not true *miracula*." They are "mere magical monstrosities."<sup>3</sup> And in the passage first cited, as if by way of furnishing the correction of his own previous remarks, he adds, in a foot-note on the very same page,<sup>4</sup> that "In so far as evil is merely a product of created powers, we may say that the satanic miracles are merely apparent miracles; since miracles can be performed by God's omnipotence alone." What, then, becomes of the assertion that, according to the Scriptures, "not only holy, but also evil power" is "the cause of miracles"? What becomes of the "two series of miracles" extending through scripture history? And what becomes of the objection to the evidential force of the miracles of Christianity? Is a real miracle of no force to confirm a true message, because a sham miracle may be wrought to confirm a false one?<sup>5</sup>

More consistent, though we think not more correct, is the position of Trench, who regards these wonders

<sup>1</sup> 2 Thess. ii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> See note (I.) at the end of this Article.

<sup>3</sup> Com. Vol. v. p. 331.

<sup>4</sup> Com. Vol. i. p. 336.

<sup>5</sup> See note (J.) at the end of this Article.



of Satan and his false prophets as real miracles, and therefore as weakening, if not destroying, the *prima facie* evidence of the true miracles in favor of the mission or the divine doctrine of him who performs them. Yet in answer to the question, Of what use, then, are the real miracles? he affirms<sup>1</sup> that when once the doctrine has *proved* itself to be true and good, by commending itself to the conscience, the miracles may then come in as “the credentials for the bearer of that good word — signs that he has a special mission for the realization of the purposes of God in regard of humanity.”

Even as thus employed do not the true miracles prove both the message and the man to be from God? But is this the whole force of scripture miracles? Must the doctrine first be proved true, before the miracles wrought in connection with it can be admitted as evidence in the case? Is it not enough that there is in the doctrine or system nothing manifestly untrue, or inconsistent with the supposition that it is from God? This granted, do not the miracles come in with a positive force to substantiate the claim that man and message are divinely sent? We would by no means contend that the miracle is to be taken in proof of the doctrine, *entirely irrespective* of the character of that doctrine; nor, on the other hand, would we require the doctrine first to prove itself, and then to prove the miracle, which, in turn, once proved, is to come in as collateral security for the very foundation on which itself reposes.

We would by no means disparage or undervalue the internal evidence of Christianity. It is good in its

<sup>1</sup> Notes on Miracles, p. 28.

place. To the humble, believing disciple it comes with convincing power. It is to him the best and strongest of all evidences that the system is from God. To one already convinced, or disposed to be convinced, the purity of the life and of the teachings of Jesus present an irresistible argument. But it is not to such persons solely or chiefly that the evidences of Christianity address themselves. It is not the humble believer that needs to be convinced; he is convinced already. It is the unbeliever — the man who is disposed to set aside the whole thing as unreasonable or unworthy of his notice, and to regard the teachers of the new faith as either credulous fools or cunning imposters — that needs to be convinced that this despised faith, and these despised men, are indeed from God. Now with him the internal evidence is not so likely to be conclusive. In many cases it will make no impression upon him whatever. He will see no force in the argument, because not himself in a moral condition to be affected by such considerations. But let the earth en at his feet; let the prison walls be shaken, and iron gates touched by no visible hand fly back on their hinges; let voices from heaven be heard; sick men be healed by a passing shadow, blind men tored to sight by a touch, dead men to life by a word — let these things, and such as these, be done in his immediate presence, and in direct attestation of the divine authority of the new system, and from such evidence the stoutest sceptic will find it difficult to turn away.

But it will perhaps be replied, the unbelieving scribe and Pharisee *did* turn away from precisely these arguments and evidences in the time of Christ and his

disciples, unconvinced even by the signs and wonders. True, they did so. But if they rejected Christianity as thus attested, *how much more* would they have despised and set aside its claims had it come to them with no such manifestation of authority. What impression would the purity of the character and the elevation of the doctrines of Jesus have made upon a prejudiced and unbelieving age, had there been no other evidences of his divine mission?

And here we shall be met by the objection that miracles are adapted to a rude and primitive age, such as that in which Christianity, for example, made its first entrance into the world—an age of great credulity and of comparative intellectual barbarism; that while they are fitted to impress with awe the minds of men in such an age, they are quite out of place in the argument for Christianity in this nineteenth century. This is the key-note of the essay of Mr. Powell, to which we have so frequently referred. Rosenmüller and Paulus also take the view that miracles were of evidential force only at the time when they were wrought, but have long ceased to be so. Similar is the view of Schliermacher, who regards them as, in fact, not miracles at all, except as relatively to the apprehensions of the age.

In opposition to all such views, we maintain that those miraculous manifestations of divine power which accompanied the promulgation of Christianity were adapted not to the age, as such, in distinction from other ages of the world,—not to any one age as being more or less enlightened, more or less credulous, more or less barbarous,—but rather to any age that is to receive a new dispensation or revelation from God.

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They are adapted not to one age more than another, save as one, and not another, is to receive that revelation. No increase of intellectual or scientific culture would have obviated the necessity for such divine interpositions, at any time when a new system of religious truth was to be inaugurated, and its claims to divine authority established. Indeed, if a new revelation were now to be made, miracles would be necessary to establish it. Nothing short of this would convince the very men who reject as unnecessary all external evidences of Christianity, that God was in very deed speaking unto them. The distinction now made between the adaptation of miracles to the promulgation of a new system of divine truth, and their adaptation to the particular age in which that system happens to be first promulgated, is a distinction too obvious to require argument, but one which is wholly overlooked by the class of objectors to whom we refer.

But, it will be said, even though miracles may have been useful at the first introduction of a new dispensation, it by no means follows that they are useful now. In one sense, this is true. Christianity once established as a system from God, there is no further need of miracles to establish it. The working of miracles may thenceforth be dispensed with, unless some new occasion shall arise, demanding new interpositions of divine power. But it does not follow that the miracles which have been wrought, and on which the system depends for confirmation, are no longer of use. They are as much needed now as they ever were. There is no need of new piers to support the dome of St. Peter's. Pier-building, so far as St. Peter's is concerned, may be discontinued when once the dome is up and securely

held in its place. It does not follow, however, that the piers already there are no longer needed, and may as well be taken down. This, again, is a distinction which certain minds of a "comprehensive capacity" fail to apprehend. Because *miracles* are no longer needed in support of Christianity, they conclude that the *argument* from miracles is no longer of use.

Our argument thus far proceeds on the supposition that the direct and special object of a miracle is to establish the divine commission and authority of him who performs it, and so of the truth or system which he propounds. For this it is needed. This it accomplishes, and was designed to accomplish. But does it prove anything more than this? Does it also prove the inspiration or divine authorship of the writings that record it? We think not. Miracles are wrought, not to prove the writings infallible and of divine origin, but to substantiate the claims of the teacher or prophet to be a man sent from God and clothed with divine authority. They prove the inspiration of the *man*, and not of the *books* or writings, as such. The miracles of Jesus prove his inspiration and authority and that of his doctrine; but they do not prove the inspiration or divine authority of the Gospel of Matthew or of the Gospel of Luke. If the problem be to establish the inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures, the argument from miracles is not in place, unless it can be shown that miracles were wrought with a view to establish that inspiration; but we know of no miracle wrought for this purpose. If, however, the problem be to establish the divine authority of Moses or of Paul, as speaking by commission from God, and so to confirm their *teaching* or message, the argument from miracles is in

place and of force ; for it does prove that. And such is the use which Christ and his apostles actually make of the miracles which they perform, as shown in the passages cited above. They constantly appeal to them as evidence of their own divine commission : “ Though ye believe not me, believe the works.”<sup>1</sup> “ Go and tell John what things ye have seen,”<sup>2</sup> said Christ. To the same effect is the language of the writer to the Hebrews : “ God also *bearing them witness*, both with signs and wonders and with diverse miracles.”<sup>3</sup>

To the question, then, “ What does a miracle prove ? we answer, it proves the divine commission of him who performs it, and so the divine authority of his doctrine. It proves Christianity to be a system of divine origin, a religion sent from God. It is the broad seal of heaven stamped upon the system as its credential. This was the intention ; this the accomplished fact.

<sup>1</sup> John x. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Luke vii. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. ii. 4.



## NOTES.

## NOTE A. — Page 382.

We say such as requires *divine* power to perform ; for the idea that miracles may be performed by created beings, or even by evil beings, whether men or angels, other than as mere instruments of almighty power, finds, as it seems to us, no countenance in the Scriptures.

## NOTE B. — Page 383.

The definition by Augustine : “ *Miraculum voco quidquid arduum aut insolitum supra spem vel facultatem mirantis apparet* ” (De utilitate cred. c. 16), is certainly faulty in this respect. It is, as Trench has well observed, a definition of the mirabile rather than of the miraculum.

## NOTE C. — Page 388.

It is well remarked by Trench, with respect to the miracle of healing : “ That it is sickness which is abnormal, and not health. The healing is the restoration of the primitive order. We should see in the miracle not the infraction of a law, but behold in it the lower law neutralized, and, for the time, put out of working by a higher ; and of this abundant analogous examples are evermore going forward before our eyes. Continually we behold in the world around us lower laws held in restraint by higher, — mechanic by dynamic ; chemical by vital ; physical by moral ; yet we say not, when the lower thus gives place in favor of the higher, that there was any violation of law, — that anything contrary to nature came to pass ; rather we acknowledge the law of a greater freedom swallowing up the law of a lesser. Thus, when I lift my arm, the law of gravitation is not, as far as my arm is concerned, denied or annihilated ; it exists as much as ever, but is held in suspense by the higher law of my will ” (Notes on Miracles, p. 4). We should not

say that it was even *held in suspense*. It not only exists but *acts* as forcibly as it ever did; and the higher law of the will must *counter-act* it.

To the same effect the gifted author of *Nature and the Supernatural* (p. 338). "A miracle is no suspension or violation of the laws of nature. Here is the point where the advocates of miracles have so fatally weakened their cause by too large a statement. The laws of nature are subordinated to miracles, but they are not suspended or discontinued by them. If I raise my arm, I subordinate the law of gravity, and produce a result against the force of gravity, but the law, or the force, is not discontinued. On the contrary, it is acting still, at every moment, as uniformly as if it held the arm to its place. All the vital agencies maintain a chemistry of their own that subordinates the laws of inorganic chemistry. Nothing is more familiar to us than the fact of a subordination of natural laws."

NOTE D. — Page 389.

The distinction made by *Fichte*, between an event as being *from* natural laws, and as being *according* to natural laws, strikes us as well grounded. An effect which comes under the latter designation does not necessarily come under the former.

NOTE E. — Page 391.

The whole force of *Spinoza's* argument against the miracles of christianity, as also the chief strength of the assault by modern infidel rationalism, lies precisely here. The rationalist is careful to define a miracle as something contrary to the laws of nature, — a violation of fixed, established order. Set the definition aside for a moment, and you set aside at once the main force of his attacks.

NOTE F. — Page 395.

It is maintained by one of our ablest modern naturalists, Dr. Edward Hitchcock (*Bibliotheca Sacra*, Oct. 1854, Article, Special Divine Interpositions in Nature), that so far from there being in nature any presumption against the miracles of revelation, there is, on the contrary, an actual and strong presumption in their favor, from the fact that, to all appearances, and according to all ordinary laws of reasoning, there have been in nature itself repeated instances of divine miraculous interposition. The first introduction

of organic life upon the globe, which had previously existed as an inorganic mass, through long ages and many changes gradually preparing for the future abode of vegetable and animal life, is regarded as such an interposition. The subsequent and repeated disappearance of living species, and the production of new ones in their places, which, after flourishing for long periods, have in turn disappeared, only to give place to some new and independent system ; the introduction thus of new races and systems of life adapted to the changed condition of things, until we can trace at least five of these independent economies, is claimed as another evidence of miraculous interposition in nature. The final introduction of man himself upon the globe, at a period long subsequent to the introduction of vegetable and animal life, and the changes already spoken of, his appearance of a sudden, after these vast periods of time, and these successive independent groups of organic beings, had passed away, is another clear case of miraculous interposition in nature.

Should it be objected to this reasoning that the appearance of any new phenomenon, as the introduction of a new species of plants or animals, for which we cannot account by any known laws, or trace its connection with any previously existing circumstances, does not of itself *prove* miraculous interposition, it may be replied that we have as good evidence of divine interposition in the cases referred to, as we have of direct creation in any case. If the first existence of life on a planet does not imply creative power and divine interposition, neither does the first appearance of the planet itself in hitherto empty space imply such agency. The development theory of Lamarck and of the "Vestiges," and also the theory of Crosse on spontaneous generation, and the more recent theory of Darwin on the origination of new species by natural causes, could they be substantiated, would indeed set aside the argument for divine interposition in the cases above cited ; but we see not why they should not also set it aside in all other cases, reducing what we have hitherto, in our ignorance, called creation, to mere development, and origination of new species by laws and forces already existing. It remains only, with Powell and other naturalists, to claim for these laws and forces an *universal* and *eternal* existence, and the circuit is complete. This point reached, and we have no further evidence of, nor indeed *occasion for*, a God, whether in or out of nature. Blank atheism is the upshot.

## NOTE G. — Page 400.

The progress of natural science in the direction of scepticism, if we may credit recent indications, is one of the most strongly marked features of the present time. To those of us who have been accustomed to entertain the old-fashioned notion of creation and a Creator, it is somewhat startling to be informed, as we are by Mr. Baden Powell, that this idea is now in a fair way to be exploded, in fact, is already rejected by philosophic minds; that, on the high authority of Mr. Owen, creation is, in fact, *only another name for our ignorance of the mode of production*; that, according to the unanswerable argument of another writer, new species *must* have originated either by development out of previously organized forms, or by spontaneous generation; that, while naturalists have been disposed to deny the development theories of Lamarck, and the “*Vestiges of Creation*,” and have refused their belief to the experiments of Crosse, or of Weekes, in regard to spontaneous generation, a work has appeared by a naturalist of the highest authority, — Darwin, on the *Origination of Species*, — which substantiates, on undeniable grounds, the principle of the origination of new species by natural causes, — a work, we are assured, “which must soon bring about an entire revolution of opinion in favor of the grand principle of the *self-evolving forces of nature* (Recent Inquiries, pp. 156, 157); that the grand law of conservation, and the stability of the heavenly movements, a principle now recognized by all sound cosmical philosophers, is only a type of the grand, eternal, self-sustaining, self-evolving, powers of nature (p. 151); that so clear and indisputable has the great truth become of the invariable order and necessary connection of nature’s operations, moving on by grand, universal, eternal law, that not only all philosophical enquirers are now compelled to admit it as the basis of their investigations, but even “minds of a *less comprehensive capacity*,” as, for example, theological and moral reasoners, are constrained to acknowledge its force (ib.).

We might be disposed to raise a question as to the correctness of these sweeping statements, and startling facts and principles of science; but as we belong to that class of minds which is of a “less comprehensive capacity,” and as we are distinctly assured that the subject is really quite beyond our comprehension, and that it is “hazardous ground for any general-moral reasoner to take, to discuss subjects of evidence, which essentially involve that higher apprecia-

tion of physical truth, which can be attained only from an accurate and comprehensive acquaintance with the connected series of the physical and mathematical sciences" (ib.), we see no way but to make our bow and retire, with the best grace possible, from a vicinity so dangerous.

NOTE H. — Page 402.

The theory of Strauss, it should be remarked, pre-supposes that the narratives are not authentic. If the miracles are myths, fables, the inventions of romance, then the Gospels are the invention of some later period, and not reliable historic narratives. But it is not the Gospels alone which narrate the occurrence of miracles. The Acts of the Apostles are full of them. So are the books of Moses. To make out the myth theory we must, in fact, reject not merely the credibility, but the authenticity, of the greater part of Scripture.

NOTE I. — Page 416.

The question whether miracles are ever wrought by any other than divine power, is very ably discussed by Dr. Taylor, of New Haven, in opposition to the views of Dr. Chalmers, who takes the ground that it is presumption to affirm that Omnipotence alone can set aside the laws of nature. (See *Revealed Theology*, Vol. iii. p. 396, *et seq*).

NOTE J. — Page 416.

The position of Olshausen is singularly inconsistent as regards the true force of the Christian miracles. "It cannot possibly," he thinks, "be the end of miracles to establish the truth of any affirmation. In the sense of Scripture, too, this is by no means the intention of miracles. It was only the people that so viewed them, because they allowed themselves to be influenced in their judgment by the impression of power or the excitement of the senses; for which reasons they attached themselves to false prophets as willingly, and even more so, than to the true. The Saviour, therefore, severely rebukes this eagerness for sensible miracles (John iv. 48). But when our Lord, in other places (e.g. John x. 25; xiv. 10, 11), calls for faith in his works, and connects them with his dignity and his holy office, *this is not done in order to establish the truth of his declarations; truth, as such, rather proclaims itself irresistibly to impressible minds by its inward nature.*" For what then, we ask, were the miracles intended?

“They were intended rather,” replies Olshausen, “to demonstrate his character as a divine messenger, for those in whom the impression of the truth, conveyed by the spirit and language of the Saviour had wrought its effect.” (Com., Vol. i. p. 336). But in establishing his character as a divine messenger, do they not also establish the truth of his message ; and is not this really what they were designed to do ? For what purpose is it sought to establish the character of the messenger, but to make good the truth of the message ? *To establish the truth of his declarations is the very thing in view.* Even Olshausen himself admits this, in the sentences which almost immediately follow. In the human teacher, he says, though truth may greatly predominate, error cannot be conceived as wholly excluded. God, therefore, invested particular individuals, as his instruments, with higher powers, in order to distinguish them from merely human teachers, “and to accredit them before mankind as infallible instruments of the Holy Spirit, as teachers of absolute truth.” Hence, he continues, “the gift of miracles is one of the necessary characteristics of true prophets, and serves to witness their superior character, — to prove that they are to be regarded as teachers and guides of the faith, and *free from all error.*” Precisely so. In other words, *to establish the truth of their declarations and doctrines.* The truth is, the object or end of the miracle is twofold — primarily to attest the divine character and claims of the messenger ; ultimately and chiefly, to attest the truth of his doctrine ; the former, with a view to, and for the sake of the latter.



## V.

### SIN, AS RELATED TO HUMAN NATURE AND TO THE DIVINE PURPOSE.<sup>1</sup>

THERE is, perhaps, no one topic in the whole province of theological investigation that presents to the philosophic and thoughtful inquirer more, or more formidable, problems than the doctrine of sin. It meets him in every direction, and always with a difficulty. Whether he turn his thoughts to the divine or human side of theology, — Godward or manward, — in either case, he comes directly upon this strange and unaccountable phenomenon. It stands like some fearful spectre in his path, barring further progress.

There are two aspects in which this doctrine is of special moment to the theological inquirer. One is, the relation which it sustains to *the nature of man*; the other, its relation to *the divine will and purpose*. It is the object of the following pages, not to offer new opinions or advance a new theory on these topics, — that would be difficult to do, and of little use withal, — but rather to gather up in a resumé, at once historic and critical, the leading theories which have been already advanced in respect to these disputed points. It is in this direction, perhaps, that progress can best be made, if made at all, in the science of

<sup>1</sup> From the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. xx. No. 79. July, 1863.

theology, as regards matters which have been so long and so widely under discussion as those now indicated. And first:

#### THE RELATION OF SIN TO HUMAN NATURE.

That human nature is corrupt is too evident to admit of serious question. The universal prevalence of sin; its early manifestation and spontaneous development, under all possible varieties of condition and circumstance; the difficulty with which it is in any case resisted and overcome; the certainty with which it may be predicted in the future history of any human being just entering on a career of moral agency, all point in one direction — all go to show that the evil is not accidental, but radical, and that its root is deep in our nature. The propensity to sin must be innate, else why these characteristics? What better evidence can we have that any propensity, disposition, or trait of character is native than that which is thus afforded?

The great problem is not to establish the fact, for that is already clear, but to account for it. Two questions, in fact, demand solution. Its *origin*: Whence comes this innate propensity to evil in man? Its *morality*: Is such a propensity in itself culpable? These are questions which no thoughtful mind will lightly ask, or answer without careful reflection.

1. *Its origin*: How comes man to have a nature thus corrupt?

To this, many answers have been given. The several possible solutions may be resolved, if we mistake not, into the following: A. It is supposable that this nature was *originally implanted by the Creator*. B. It

is supposable that it was *acquired in some previous state of being*, as consequence of some sinful act on the part of each individual. C. It is supposable that it is *derived from a sinful ancestry*, in whose loss of innocence their whole posterity is involved. This latter, again, admits of threefold statement, according as we suppose this derivation of corrupt nature to occur: *a.* By virtue of the *generic unity* of the race, so that the sin of one man is the sin of the whole; or, *b.* By virtue of the *constructive unity* of the race with its first parent as representative or federal head; or, *c.* By virtue of *the laws of natural descent, like producing like.*

Of these several suppositions (A, B, C), each is possible, and one or other, it would seem, must be true. The innate propensity in man to sin must either be the work of God in his original creation, or else something which he has brought upon himself; if the latter, then it must have been in some previous state of being, or else by connection with a sinful ancestry in the present world.

Of these theories, the first (A) requires at present little discussion. To suppose God the author of a depraved constitution in man originally, is to make him really the author of sin. It is to suppose him planting with his own hand the seeds of evil, with absolute certainty of the result. God's work is not of that sort. What he makes is such that he can pronounce it very good. Man as he comes from the hand of his Creator is pure. How else could he be justly punished for sinning? It would be the height of injustice for God to endow man with a nature sure to lead to sin, and then punish him for sinning. Such inconsistency and

injustice are surely not to be ascribed to the most perfect Being.

B. It is possible that the propensity in question comes over to us from a previous state of being, in consequence of sin there committed. This would seem to have been the view of Origen. It is advanced in our own time by two distinguished theologians, Dr. J. Müller of Germany, in his "Christian Doctrine of Sin," and Dr. Edward Beecher of this country, in his well-known "Conflict of Ages." Each, however, from a different point of view; Müller seeking merely to account for the fact of universal sinfulness; Beecher, to justify the arrangement on the part of God by which man comes into the world with a depraved nature. Both find in this theory the only satisfactory solution of their problem.

Of this theory it may be said that, while it is certainly a possible, it is by no means a probable, supposition. It supposes too many things—things which not only *are* not, but, in the very nature of the case, *cannot* be, established on reasonable grounds—things which do not admit of proof. It supposes: 1. That each one of the race has had a previous existence. 2. That in that previous state he was a moral agent. 3. That in the exercise of his moral agency he sinned. 4. That he did so without any previous bias or propensity to sin; since this propensity is the very thing to be accounted for. 5. That his sin vitiated his nature. 6. That he brought that corrupt and vitiated nature with him into the present state of being.

Now all these propositions may be true; but there is no evidence that one of them is so—none from reason, none from revelation, none from consciousness.

The only argument in its favor seems to be that *if* true, it might relieve the subject of certain difficulties. But this in itself is no proof of the theory. It may be that other methods will also relieve those difficulties. The key in my hand may possibly unlock the door; but other keys may also do the same. It may be, also, that in the present instance the difficulties are such as are not fully met by any theory yet proposed. It is by no means certain that the key in question really will fit the lock, and open the door so long closed to human entrance. It is by no means certain that the divine character is to be cleared up, and the divine proceeding justified, by any such method.

The real difficulty is to see how it could consist with the wisdom and justice and goodness of God to place man, while yet sinless, in such circumstances that he would be likely and even sure to sin. But this is a difficulty which presses equally on the theory of pre-existence. It has no advantage over any other theory in this matter, since it too admits and pre-supposes that man *did* sin in that previous state, and of course that he was placed in such circumstances that his sin was not only possible and probable, but *sure* to occur, for it *did* occur. If it is wrong for God to place men here in such circumstances, and expose them to such influences that they will be quite sure to sin, why not equally unjust for him to do it there?

Nay, the difficulty is not only not relieved, but actually augmented, by the theory under consideration. If the problem is to explain how one pure-minded, sinless being, Adam by name, came to sin, it is surely no help towards its solution to be told that the same thing happened once to every individual of the race —

that every human being is, in fact, Adam. This is simply multiplying the difficulty by just the number of the human family. If the problem is to show how God could be just, and yet leave man in Paradise so unguarded that he would certainly fall, it is surely no relief to be told that he left not one, but all, human souls in that predicament.

Nor does the justice of the procedure shine forth more conspicuously in the subsequent stages of the process. To take each soul when once it has fallen and sinned, deprive it of its consciousness, of all consciousness of the past, reduce it to a condition of infantile weakness, subject it, in this condition and under these disadvantages, to a new probation, with the absolute certainty that thus placed it will sin, and to hang over it the doom of eternal death, if under these circumstances it should sin,—all this, moreover, as the penalty of that previous transgression of which it is wholly unconscious,—this is surely no material relief of the difficulty, nor a very satisfactory clearing up of the divine justice.

The theory fails, then, inasmuch as it presents a series of suppositions unsupported by evidence, incapable of proof, and which, even if admitted, tend rather to augment than to relieve the real difficulty.

C. Since theories A and B fail to meet the case, we have this supposition, that the depravity of human nature is derived from a sinful ancestry, in whose primal loss of innocence their whole posterity is in some way involved. There seems to be no other reasonable and probable supposition. This seems both reasonable and probable. To judge *a priori*, it would seem not unlikely that if man should fall it would



affect his posterity in just this way — that they would follow the fortunes of the parent; not unlikely that God would choose to have it so. We do not know, indeed, that, without special divine interposition, it could be otherwise. It is the universal law of nature that like shall produce like. As the tree, so the fruit. It is the great law of nature, moreover, that the innocent suffer with the guilty — that, in many things, the consequences of transgression reach beyond the immediate actor, and fall with crushing weight on those who are not personally responsible for the deed. It would be quite in keeping with both these great laws, were the vitiated and corrupt nature of fallen Adam to become the nature also of his whole posterity.

With this view both the teaching of Scripture and the facts of the world's history correspond. In the narrative of the fall we have the only authentic account of the first entrance of sin into our world. It is an undeniable fact that human depravity has existed ever since that first sin of the first man, and that, without exception, all his descendants partake of that moral nature which belonged to him after that event. These facts indicate a close connection of the two things. Such a connection is evidently implied in the Scriptures, and in some passages directly affirmed. We are told that by one man sin came into the world, and death by sin, and that the consequence was universal sinfulness and universal death.<sup>1</sup> In succeeding verses of the same chapter the idea is resumed and repeated. It was by the disobedience of the one that the many became sinners, even as it is by the obedience of one

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 12.

that many are justified.<sup>1</sup> In these passages the sinfulness of the race is plainly ascribed to the apostacy of Adam, as the occasion and origin of the same — the fountain whence that sad and terrible consequence has flowed, and is still flowing, through the long, dark ages of the world's history.

This has been, accordingly, the view generally received in the Christian church from the first. In this the great body of those who adopt the Christian system agree, both old and new school, Calvinist and Arminian. As to the *nature* of the connection, they differ; as to the *fact* of a connection, they agree.

To the different views respecting the nature of this connection, — the manner in which the depravity of the race links itself with, and proceeds from, the sin of the first parent, — let us now turn our attention. As already stated, the subordinate theories are these:

a. That of the *generic unity* of the race, as virtually one with Adam — existing in him, sinning in him — his sin their sin. This is probably the earliest theory on this subject. It regards the act of Adam as the act of the race. The common nature of the race existed in him. He was the genus, comprising within itself all the species and individuals subsequently to be, as the first oak contained within itself all future oaks. The race was in him, not, indeed, in an individual capacity, but generically, and so sinned in him not as individuals, but as to the generic nature. The theory is closely related to the realism of Plato, and the Platonie and Neo-Platonie schools. It has found adherents, for the most part, among the admirers and disciples of that philosophy. It was thus with Augus-

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 18, 19.

tine. Accustomed to the realistic mode of thought, trained to regard abstractions as realities and to merge the individual in the genus, his theology on this point was simply the natural outgrowth of his philosophy. Misled, doubtless, he may have been, in part, by the Vulgate version of Rom. v. 12, "in *quo* omnes peccaverunt," as he, in turn, misled others (e.g. the synod of Carthage) by his exposition of that passage; but such a mind as his could hardly have been thus misled by any single verse or version, however faulty, had not a false philosophy, and a wrong habit of thought thus induced, prepared him to be easily thus misled. It is not so much the Vulgate version, as the Platonic realism, that speaks through Augustine in such utterances as these: "All men sinned in him, inasmuch as all *were ille unus*." "Those who were afterwards to be many out of him, were then one in him." "All were in that individual, and all those *were he*, none of whom as yet existed individually." "In which one all have sinned in common, previously to personal sins of each one as an individual."<sup>1</sup>

The theory under consideration may be regarded as properly that of Augustine, to whom it is indebted for its leading features, if not strictly for its origin. It soon became the prevalent theory of the Latin Fathers, more especially of the African church. The theologians of the Middle Ages found it quite accordant with their speculative views. The Reformers in many instances adopted it. In the twelfth century, Odo, Bishop of Cambray, gives it clear and precise statement. "My

<sup>1</sup> See for the above and similar passages, de Pec. Mer. i. 10; Op. Imp. iv. 104; Ep. 194, c. 6; de Civ. Dei, xlii. See also Müncher von Cölln, and Wigger's (Emerson's Tr.), for similar statements.

mind was in him [Adam], not as a person, but as a component part of the species; not in my individual nature, but in the common nature. For the common nature of every human mind was guilty of sin in Adam. Therefore every human mind was guilty of sin in Adam. Therefore every human mind is blameworthy in respect to its nature, but not in respect to its person. Therefore the sin by which we sinned in Adam is to me a sin of my nature; in Adam it was a personal sin. I sinned in him, not as *I*, but as this substance which I am. I sinned as *man*, not as *Odo*," that is, as genus, not as individual.<sup>1</sup> Among the moderns we find Owen, a realist and Platonist, holding the same view. It is maintained by Dr. Baird, in his "Elohim revealed."

In a modified form, this view is held also by President Edwards. The race is one with Adam, according to his view, not, indeed, as the genus is comprehensive of the species, and of the individuals which it contains under it, but rather by an absolute, divinely-constituted unity, by virtue of which his sin is as truly theirs as the sin of a man to-day is his also to-morrow. It rests on the principle that God can make anything to be one and identical with anything else that he chooses. In common with the Augustinian theory, this maintains the essential unity of the race with Adam, so that his sin is really and truly, not by construction or imputation merely, the sin of all his posterity. All men are truly and properly guilty of his sin, and for it deserve eternal death.

With respect to the merits of this theory, it is scarcely necessary to remark that it is based on a false philosophy. The race is not one with Adam in such a

<sup>1</sup> See Odo on Original Sin, Bib. Vet. Pat., Vol. xxi.

sense as that here intended. His act is not, and cannot be, literally the act of the race. Whether we define sin as properly an act, or as both an act and also a state, in either case it is the act or the state of a personal moral being. None other can sin. It was as a personal moral being that Adam sinned. We, his descendants, were not then in existence as personal beings, and of course could not have sinned in his transgression, nor have shared the guilt of it. If it be said human nature was summed up in him, we reply, a nature may be vitiated, as no doubt human nature was in him, its origin and fountain; but a nature does not sin, for it is not a personal being. To say that the race, as such, sinned in its progenitor, is simply to personify an abstraction. Abstractions do not sin.

Nor is it better to resolve the thing, with Edwards, into an arbitrary act of divine power. It is not within the province of Omnipotence to make things which are really distinct identical with each other. God cannot make the act of Caesar, or Ghengis Khan, to be, truly and properly, my act. He may impute it to me, treat me as if it were mine, punish me for it; but that does not make it mine. Nay, if I commit the very same sin, in other words, do the same thing, it will still be true that the act of Caesar is his, and my act is mine; and no power in the universe can make them identical.

Further than this, we are disposed to ask why that *one* act of Adam, that is, the first sin, should be ours also, more than any other and all other subsequent acts and sins of the same individual? If the race was in him, generically and seminally, in his *first* transgression, it was so in his *second* and his *third*. All



his acts are our acts, as really as the first transgression. at least until the race begins to diverge into its separate individual life. Even then, for aught we see, the same law holds in the direct line of descent. The race lies as really summed up in Seth, and Enos, as it did in Adam. Are their sins also ours? Why not, on this theory? Did we not exist generically in Seth, and afterward in Noah? In fact, are not all the sins of all our progenitors in danger of coming down upon our heads, on this theory, unless we stand from under it? And, still further, why are not all our posterity sinning in us, on the same principle.

From some passages in his writings, it would seem that these logical consequences of his theory did not escape the mind of Augustine, and that he was not disposed to shrink from them. He thinks it not improbable "that children are liable for the sins, not only of the first pair, but also of those from whom they are born," and that the sins of ancestors universally are the heritage of their descendants. "But respecting the sins of the other parents," he says, "the progenitors from Adam down to one's own immediate father, it may not improperly be debated whether the child is implicated in the evil acts and multiplied original faults of all, so that each one is the worse in proportion as he is the later; or that in respect to the sins of their parents, God threatens posterity to the third and fourth generation, because, by the moderation of his compassion, he does not further extend his anger in respect to the faults of progenitors, lest those on whom the grace of regeneration is not conferred should be pressed with too heavy a load in their own eternal damnation, if they were compelled to contract by way of origin the



sins of *all* their preceding parents from the commencement of the human race, and to suffer the punishment due for them."<sup>1</sup>

*b.* Passing from this, we have next the theory of the *constructive* unity of the race with Adam, as its federal head and representative, by virtue of a special covenant made with him to that effect. The sin of Adam is not really and properly that of the race, but only by construction. He acts for the whole, by special divine arrangement. It is *as if* they were there and sinned, each in person. Such, it is maintained, is the relation of the race to the first parent as to justify such an arrangement and constitute the ground of it. In him the race stands its probation. He represents them in the whole transaction. In him they are tried, in him they sin, with him they fall. Forensically his sin is their sin. To them it is reckoned or imputed, *as if* it were theirs.

The two theories, *a* and *b*, differ in this. According to *a*, the sin of Adam is really and properly the sin of the race, and is therefore imputed to all his descendants. According to *b*, it is imputed to them, and therefore it is theirs. In the one case, it is mine because imputed; in the other, it is imputed because it is already mine.

The view now presented is that advocated in the Princeton Repertory, and in the Southern Presbyterian Review. It is, we suppose, the received doctrine of the Old School Presbyterian church. Among the Christian Fathers we find no distinct traces of this doctrine. It would seem to have originated with the schoolmen, and to have made little progress until after the six-

<sup>1</sup> Euchir., c. 46, 47, as cited by Emerson in Wigger's *Augustinism*. See also comments of the translator on the above passage.

teenth century. It became the favorite theory of the German Reformed theologians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and was favored by some of the Lutherans of the same period.<sup>1</sup>

To this view, it occurs as a serious, if not fatal, objection, that if the relation of the race to Adam is not such as to make us really and justly chargeable with his sin, then it is not such as to be a just ground for treating us *as if* we were chargeable with it. If his sin is not, as the former theory affirms, and as this denies, really and truly ours, then it is certainly not right and just to charge it to us, and to deal with us *as if* it were ours. It is a manifest injustice to impute to any man what does not really belong to him in the way of evil, and then to treat him as if he were what the charge implies; and no covenant, real or imaginary, can make it otherwise. The covenant that does this is unjust. It would be a manifest wrong to hold any living man responsible for the sin of Cain, of Noah, or of David. But if the sin of Adam may be imputed to us, without personal participation of our own, why not the sins of any other ancestor or predecessor? If we did not share in the transgression, how can we share in the guilt? Or, if made to share the guilt in the one case, why not also in the others? We do not see anything in the mere fact that Adam stands at the head of the race, stands first in the line, that can essentially change the relation of the parties, or make it right for us to be charged with his sins, more than if he stood second, tenth, or fiftieth in the line of pro-

<sup>1</sup> Among the former may be mentioned Witsius; among the latter, Pfaff of Tübingen, some of the disciples of Wolf, Baumgarten, and others.

genitorship. The relation itself constitutes no ground for such transfer of guilt, in the one case more than in the other, nor in either case; and if such transfer of blame and responsibility be made, it must be by virtue of an arrangement purely arbitrary, and which in any other case men would not hesitate to pronounce unreasonable and unjust.

This injustice the previous theory escapes, by supposing the race, as such, actually to have sinned in Adam, and so justly to be chargeable with the guilt of his transgression. The present theory admits that we did not really participate in his sin, and yet charges upon us the guilt of the transaction, as if we had been a party to the offence. Is this just?

It does not relieve the difficulty to be told, as in the Princeton Repertory, that imputation does not imply *transfer of moral character*, but only *exposure to punishment*; that the race did not really participate in the sin of Adam, nor in the moral ill-desert of that transgression, but only that his sin is laid to our charge, and we are punished for it. Charged with, and punished for, what we are *really* wholly innocent of! No transfer of the sin itself, none of the moral character, or blame-worthiness which attaches to all acts of transgression, since these pertain only to the transgressor himself, and cannot be transferred, but, in place of these, a transfer of the charge and of the punishment.<sup>1</sup> But does not the punishment belong to the transgressor, and to him only, as really as the sin? Is it a relief to any man's sense of injustice and wrong to tell him, "We do not really think that you committed that offence, nor do we blame you in the least for any share of yours in the

<sup>1</sup> See Article on Imputation, in Princeton Essays, series first, Essay vi.

transaction, for we know that you had none; we only *charge* you with it, and *punish* you for it!"

But we shall be told that God is a Sovereign, and has a right to make what arrangement he pleases—a right to stake the destinies of the race on the issue of Adam's probation, and if he falls, to deal with the race as if they had individually fallen—a right to impute his sin to them as if it were theirs, and deal with them accordingly. We reply, God is, indeed, a Sovereign; but that gives him no right to act unjustly—no right to punish one man for the sins of another, nor to impute to one man the acts of another. We are not to take refuge behind the throne of divine sovereignty with theories that will not bear the test of calm investigation, and that shock the common feelings of justice and propriety which nature has implanted in the human bosom. This doctrine belongs not there. Away with it, and the like of it, from that place.

Shall we, then, with others, justify the imputation of Adam's sin to the race on the supposition that God *presumed* that all his descendants would sin if placed each on trial as Adam was, and so, by an act of generalization, dealt with all as with him, on the principle *ex uno disce omnes*. This is the *scientia media* of the schoolmen. But this is a supposition wholly without proof; it is, moreover, a wholly unreasonable and arbitrary mode of procedure which is thus supposed. On the same principle, why not send the race at once to perdition, or to paradise, without individual probation, since to the divine mind it is evident from eternity that some will, and others will not, accept the offer of salvation through a Redeemer, if the question be submitted to them.

It may be replied that no objection from the apparent

injustice of the procedure can set aside the plain fact, as revealed in Scripture, that God does impute the sin of Adam to all his posterity. True, we reply, if it be a fact. But is it? Does the Scripture teach this doctrine? If so, we have nothing more to say, but bow in silence to a dispensation which, upon any principles of human reason, we can neither justify nor explain.

But we look in vain for any such teaching. The word "impute," we do, indeed, find in the Scriptures, but not in the sense here intended, that of transferring or setting to the account of another guilt not really and properly his own. Not an instance of this can be found. Abraham believes God, and it is imputed to him for righteousness. What is imputed? His faith. Whose faith? His own. Shimei prays David not to impute to him his guilt in cursing the king. Whose guilt? His own. On the contrary, do not the Scriptures expressly deny any such transfer of guilt from one to another? Do they not, in the strongest and most explicit terms, declare that in the divine administration there is, and can be, no such principle of procedure? That "the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."<sup>1</sup> The soul that sins, *it*, and *it only*, shall bear the punishment of its sins.

But does not God visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generation?<sup>2</sup> True, we reply, the children of ungodly parents suffer many evils in consequence of the sins of their ancestry.

<sup>1</sup> Ezekiel xviii. 20. Compare Deut. xxiv. 16; see also 2 Kings xiv. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. v. 9; Numb. iv. 18.



It is a principle universally true—a grand law, it would seem, of the moral universe—that sin involves the innocent along with the guilty in suffering and calamity. But there is a difference between suffering and punishment. To suffer in consequence of the sin of another is not to be *punished for* the sin of another. If so, then we are punished for the sins of our immediate ancestors no less than for the sin of Adam; nay, for theirs much more directly than for his; future generations, in like manner, will be punished for ours.

Should it be replied, that this is really all that is intended by the doctrine of imputation,—that the consequences of Adam's sin pass over to his descendants in the shape of manifold suffering and evil, by whatever name we choose to call those consequences, whether calamity or punishment,—we have simply to say, that, if this be all that is intended, then in no proper sense is it sin that is imputed, nor the guilt of sin, nor its punishment; and it is a mere perversion and abuse of language to call it so.

We have dwelt thus far upon a single objection to the theory under consideration, the injustice of treating men as if they were guilty of a sin with which they are not in reality chargeable. It is furthermore to be objected to this view of the nature of our connection with the sin of Adam, that it rests upon an assumption which is at once questionable and objectionable. That assumption is, that Adam acted, and was, by special covenant on the part of God, entitled to act, as our federal head and representative in this whole proceeding.

This is the groundwork of the theory. The probation of the race, the grand problem of its destiny, was submitted to his decision. He acted for us on trial,



sinned for us, fell for us, and his sin becomes thus, in point of *law*, though not in point of *fact*, our sin. He was, in other words, agent for the race in the matter of probation. But this is an assumption which we are not prepared to concede. Upon what evidence does it rest? The advocates of this view speak of a covenant made with Adam to this effect, constituting him our federal head and representative. What, we ask, is that covenant, and where is it? What are its terms? Who are the parties to it? Where was it made? What evidence that any such covenant was ever made by God or man? These are perfectly fair and legitimate questions. We have the right to ask them, and to demand an answer.

Besides, with what propriety could Adam act for us in the manner now supposed? A federal representative is usually supposed to derive his authority from the consent and choice of those whom he represents. But it is a singular and most remarkable feature of this compact, that those most directly interested in it, and who are to be represented in the case, who are to be put on trial and acquitted or condemned in the person of their representative, whose eternal destiny depends on the issue of that momentous trial, are not, in fact, parties to the transaction in any sense whatever, not being then in existence: What sort of a compact or federal agreement is that in which the parties chiefly interested have no share? And where is the justice and propriety of such a compact and such a representation? Is it not a gross abuse of terms to speak of Adam as our federal representative, in the sense now intended?

There is a sense, and that a very important one, we

are ready to admit, in which men do act for those who come after them. Every man acts for others, no less than for himself, in whatever he does. The *consequences* of his acts extend to others, and affect them seriously, it may be permanently. Nor can it be otherwise. When the Puritan colony set sail from Delfthaven for the shores of the new world, they were acting, not for themselves alone, but for us — for coming generations. When our fathers threw off the yoke of subjection to Great Britain, they acted for those who were to come after them. Thus are we acting in the great struggle of the present hour. In future years, when we are gone and forgotten, those who are to bear our name, and inherit our virtues, or our vices, will reap the reward of our present sacrifices and sufferings for the land that we love. So universally; the child of the convicted felon inherits the disgrace of a dishonored name; the drunkard and the profligate bequeath to their children a vitiated sensibility and a disordered constitution. *In this sense*, we are all the representatives of those who are to be affected by the results of our action. *In this sense*, Adam may be said to have represented the whole race, at the head of which he stood. No man ever brought such fearful consequences on such a multitude who came after him, such a train of woes and evils on all coming time. In this sense did he act for the race; in this, and in no other.

As respects this theory, then, while we admit and maintain that many evils resulting from the sin of Adam pass over to his posterity, not the least of which evils is a corrupt and vitiated moral nature, we cannot admit that in any proper sense his *sin* is transferred to us, or charged to us *as if* it were ours; while we admit

that *in some sense* he acted for us, just as all men act for those who come after them, we cannot admit that he was in the proper and legal sense our representative, or that he acted for us in such a sense that his sin becomes by construction our sin, and that we are held in law responsible, and exposed to punishment, for the same.

Rejecting, then, both the views already presented, under *a* and *b*, as to the nature of the connection between the depravity of the race and the sin of the first parent, we have

*c.* The view which represents that depravity as resulting simply from the laws of natural descent; the child inheriting from the parent a vitiated and corrupt nature, prone to evil, in consequence of which he comes to sin as soon as he comes to moral agency. This nature, derived from Adam through successive generations, is the consequence of his original apostasy. His own nature, which became corrupt by the fall, is transmitted to his posterity, just as like always begets its like. According to this view, we are not constituted sinners by the mere act of Adam sinning, nor by the imputation of his sin to us, nor by any agency of our own, real or imaginary, in that transaction, nor by any compact or covenant made with him in regard to us; but only by our own moral act. We are not constituted sinners until we become sinners, that is, until we sin. Sin we do, however, and that uniformly, because of the corrupt nature thus inherited. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. Adam fallen begets a son in his own likeness, and so through successive generations the evil nature extends.

This is the view now generally entertained, we be-

lieve, by the New England theologians. It would seem to be the scriptural idea of native depravity, as it certainly is the most reasonable, the most simple and natural idea of it that we can form. The theory is simply this: Like father, like son. As to most things we know that this is true. Why may it not be so as to moral nature? If a fondness for particular pursuits and professions, an ear and a taste for music, a propensity to mathematical studies or mechanical employments are, as we know they are, inherited; if the predominance of certain passions and appetites is to be traced to the same source, — if these things and the like descend from parent to child, why may it not be so with that peculiarity of the moral nature which we find to be universal in man, the propensity to evil? Why may not the moral follow the same general law which holds of the mental and the physical nature? Is not this precisely what we might expect and predict, from the simple observation of the laws of nature in regard to such matters?

II. Our second question now arises: *Is this depravity of our nature in itself culpable?* We have thus far directed our inquiries to the *origin* of the corruption which we observe in human nature. But what of its morality? Is this innate propensity to evil in itself blameworthy — in itself sin? Our question has reference, be it remembered, to the native disposition, not to human depravity in general, as manifested in the conduct of life; not to voluntary acts or voluntary states of mind, but to that vitiosity of nature itself with which we come into being, and which precedes and lies back of all voluntary acts and states. Is that culpable?

The answer, of course, will depend very much on the reply we make to the preceding question. If we brought this corruption of nature on ourselves, by our own voluntary acts in some previous state of being, then it may be culpable. If we brought it on ourselves by personal participation in Adam's transgression, then it is not only *vitium*, but *culpa*; it may justly be blamed, and justly be punished. If it comes to us by constructive participation in his sin, then, by the same construction, we may be implicated in the guilt and in the punishment of that transgression and of its consequences, of which this is one. On the other hand, if the propensity in question be something which we have in no way, whether directly or indirectly, by personal act or by construction, brought upon ourselves; if it be, for instance, the creation of Deity in the original constitution of our nature, or if it be the natural result of the sins of our ancestors before we were born, in either case, the matter being wholly out of our control, lies also beyond the lines of our responsibility. Our calamity, our misfortune, it may be, but not our guilt. Blame attaches, and can justly attach, only where there is moral agency; and moral agency involves the choices and affections, the voluntary acts and states of mind, of an intelligent rational being. But the nature with which a man comes into the world precedes all such agency on his part. It is no choice nor act of his, nor the result of any such act or choice. On the contrary, in the present case it is the result of something which occurred before he had any being—centuries before he or his immediate ancestry existed. We do not blame a man in other cases for the nature with which he was born. Why should we in this? It

may be disagreeable to us — the color of the hair, the color of the eyes, the general cast of complexion and features, the dwarfed or distorted form — extremely disagreeable; but we find no fault with the man on account of these peculiarities. He was so born. It is his misfortune, but not his fault. But is not the same true of the moral as well as of the physical condition and tendencies, in so far as they are strictly native? How can blame attach where there is no responsibility, or responsibility where there is no agency in bringing about the result? In respect to the physical traits that are strictly native, this is universally conceded. Wherein does the case really differ as respects the moral traits and tendencies that are also native? Wherein am I really any more responsible for a native tendency to good or evil, than for a native tendency to mathematical or musical studies, or for the particular color of the eyes or of the hair? Had I any more agency in producing the one than the other of these peculiarities? And how can I be held responsible for that which I had no agency in producing, and which it is wholly out of my power to prevent? A defect it may be, and that a very serious one; but am I to blame for that defect?

But, reply the Princeton divines, sin is sin, however it originates. If a man is good, he is good; if bad, he is bad, no matter how he became so. But it seems to us that it does matter how he became so, and that very materially. Otherwise, suppose that Deity himself, according to the supposition first made, did by direct creative act endow man with a disposition to evil; and suppose him then to charge that disposition to man as his own fault, and to punish him for having it. Does



it make no difference now how the man comes by that disposition? Would he not say: "It is hard, and seems unjust, to be punished simply for being what you made me"? Would it be sufficient and satisfactory for Deity to reply: "True, it seems hard; but then sin is sin, good is good, and evil is evil, wherever found, no matter how they originated! I must deal with facts as they are, without inquiring how they came to be so."

Suppose, by some statute, human or divine, all men were required to have black hair and blue eyes, and that by some misfortune it happened to one of the aforesaid divines to be otherwise provided. The fact is patent, and the logic is irresistible: he is a violator of the statute, and must pay the penalty. "But it is not my fault," replies the culprit; "I was so born; I had no agency or choice in the matter." "True," replies the judge, "but I have read in your own writings that good is good, and bad is bad, no matter how they came to be so; and surely it is true that red hair is red hair, whatever its origin. Is it not a tenet of your own philosophy, that even the native dispositions and tendencies are culpable?" To which, of course, the theologian can only reply: "Verily, it is so."

The question to be considered is not whether sin is sin, wherever found, nor yet whether all sin is blameworthy and to be punished, but whether the native tendency to evil in man is sin. To this the common sense of mankind, when fairly questioned and allowed to give true answer, makes but one reply. It recognizes nothing as truly and properly culpable which it is not in the power of man to avoid. It attaches blame only where there is responsibility, and responsibility

only where there is some agency in bringing about the result. If a man bring upon himself by his own vicious conduct a tendency to insanity or disease, men say he is responsible for that result. If he transmits that tendency to his children, they lay the blame of the disordered constitution which those children inherit, not upon the children themselves, but upon the parent who contracted and transmitted the evil. If a man, by carelessness or design, put out his own eyes, men say he is to blame, and must suffer the consequences of his own carelessness and folly. If he is born blind, he is never charged with it as any fault of his own.

But, it may be asked, is not a tendency to sin a sinful tendency? Sinful, we reply, in one sense, but not in the sense intended in the question—sinful in the sense of leading to sin, not in the sense of being itself sin. The expression is ambiguous. But is not a disposition or tendency to sin itself sin? How can it be so? we reply. Is a constitutional tendency to blindness or insanity, itself blindness or insanity? Is a predisposition to decay and death, itself decay and death? Is the tendency of a chimney to smoke, itself smoke? Yet we call the chimney smoky, and so we call the disposition sinful; meaning, in either case, that the tendency is in that direction.

But it amounts to the same thing in the end, it may be said, whether men come into the world already sinful, or with a disposition that is sure to lead to sin; in either case sin is the result. It makes just this difference, we reply: In the one case the man is a sinner by no agency and through no fault of his own; in the other case, he is a sinner from choice and by his own act. It is precisely the difference between a

responsible agent, and an irresponsible, passive recipient; between a voluntary doer, and an involuntary sufferer. As regards the responsibility of man, it is the difference between something and nothing; as regards the justice of the divine character, it is the difference between noon and midnight.

The view which we are maintaining would seem to be the most simple and obvious one — that which would commend itself to the reason and good sense of men. It is not, however, it must frankly be confessed, the view which has most widely prevailed among theologians. It was held by Zuingli among the Reformers, and by Jeremy Taylor in the English church. It is the doctrine of the New Haven divines, and, indeed, of the New England theologians generally, at the present day, as well as of the New School portion of the Presbyterian church. The older and stricter Calvinists have uniformly maintained the opposite. Calvin himself holds that our corrupt nature is sin, because the seed of sin, and therefore odious to God and sinful in his sight; and that infants may justly be punished for it, irrespective of actual transgression.<sup>1</sup>

The Helvetic and French confessions make our corrupt nature to be hereditary sin; and the latter even goes so far as to pronounce it deserving of eternal death in infants yet unborn. The Augsburg Confession takes essentially the same view, regarding native corruption as inherent sin. Such is the view of the Lutheran and Reformed churches in their various branches. The Thirty-nine Articles of the church of England make original sin the fault of the nature of every man by descent from Adam, and deserving

<sup>1</sup> See Institutes, ii. 1, 8; also Commentary on Rom. v. 12.

damnation as such. The Princeton divines, and the Old School theologians generally, of this country, regard our native corruption as itself sin. This inherent sin they hold to be the penalty for our sin in Adam, as our federal head and representative. Sin is thus made the punishment of sin. We are, in the first place, charged with a sin which we never committed, and for that sin we are punished by inheriting a depraved nature. But further, that depravity is itself a sin deserving eternal punishment. So that we are to be punished for being punished! Our sin is punishment, and our punishment is a further sin!

If we inquire for the opinions of the Greek and Latin Fathers on this subject, we find no traces of the doctrine that our native depravity is itself sin, previous to the time of Augustine. He was the very first to apply to this native bias or propensity to sin the terms *peccatum originale*. Previously Tertullian had been careful to designate it, not as *peccatum*, but as *vitium* and *malum*. "*Malum animae ex originis vitio*,"<sup>1</sup> he denominates it in one passage; and Ambrose calls it *contagium*: "*Antequam nascimur, maculamur contagio*."<sup>2</sup> The term *peccatum*, indeed, admits of this sense as well as of the other; it may be either *malum* or *culpa*; but as employed by Augustine it is taken in the stricter sense. After him it gradually found its way into the language of councils and of the Western church, not,

<sup>1</sup> De Anima, c. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Apol. David, c. 11; so also Cyprian, who in one place speaks of an infant as having committed no sin at all, but only inherited a depraved disposition from Adam — "contracted contagion." Tertullian expressly calls children whose depraved disposition is not yet developed in action "innocent"; and Clement of Alexandria says: "David, though begotten in sin, was not himself in sin, nor was himself sin."

however, without frequent dissent and protest. The distinction which in the fifth century began to be made between *peccatum originale*, and *peccata actualia*, indicates a disposition to discriminate more clearly than Augustine had done in his use of the term. Later still, the schoolmen, accustomed to greater precision in the use of terms, preferred the more accurate expression of Tertullian, *vitium naturale*.

The position of Dr. Woods, late of Andover, in respect to this matter, is somewhat anomalous. In common with the theologians of the earlier school, he holds that there is in man "a wrong disposition or a corrupt nature, which is antecedent to any sinful emotions, and from which, as an inward source, all sinful emotions and actions proceed,"<sup>1</sup> and that this disposition or nature is itself *morally wrong and sinful*. This he labors at considerable length to show. He goes further, and raises the question, "whether it may not be, partly at least, on account of this *degenerate nature* of Adam's posterity, that God speaks of them, and in his government treats them, *as sinners*, from the very beginning of their personal existence, and previously to any actual transgression."<sup>2</sup> This opinion he speaks of as one which has generally been maintained by evangelical writers, particularly Dr. Dwight, in his *System of Theology*, and thinks it *may be the true opinion*. "In our very *nature*, in the state of our minds from the beginning of our existence, God may see a moral contamination, a corrupt propensity, which, connected as it is with the first offence of Adam, renders it in his infallible judgment just and right for him to treat us as sinners. May it not be," he asks, "that

<sup>1</sup> Works, Vol. ii. p. 328.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, ii. p. 328.

infants suffer and die on this account, as well as on account of the one offence of Adam?" Yet he subsequently advances the opinion as one which substantially unites the two conflicting theories, and which will, he thinks, be most likely in the end to be generally adopted that, the *disposition*, whatever it may be, is never really regarded and treated as exclusive of action: "What I mean is that there is no such thing as a moral being who is actually treated as a subject of retribution, while his moral nature is not in some way developed in holy or unholy action."<sup>1</sup> "While any one exists, and continues to exist, with a disposition or propensity which has not in any way been manifested by action, how can he be treated as a subject of retribution? Though his disposition is wrong (wrong as a disposition), he must ultimately be treated according to his actions, they being the true expression of his disposition."<sup>2</sup>

So we should say. But what then becomes of the proposition that, because of this disposition, prior to all acts of transgression, God may treat infants as sinners, and they suffer and die on this account? The two positions are manifestly and utterly at variance.

Dr. Woods strongly disclaims the idea that infants will be condemned to future misery merely because of native depravity. "I am not aware that any intelligent Christian can be found," he says, "who maintains the unauthorized and appalling position that infant children, who are not guilty of any actual sin, either outwardly or inwardly, will be doomed to misery in the world to come."<sup>3</sup> But *why not*, if the native disposition is itself sin, morally wrong *per se*, "the essence of

<sup>1</sup> Works, Vol. ii. p. 840.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, ii. p. 842.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, ii. p. 341.



moral evil," "the sum of all that is vile and hateful," — why may it not be punished, and that justly? Moreover, if infants actually do suffer and die, *as sinners*, because of this *nature* merely, though not as yet developed in moral action — if their sufferings and death are the actual punishment of that *inherent sin*, as the earlier writers maintain, and as Dr. Woods thinks may be the case, how do we know that they may not be punished also hereafter for the same offence? If their native disposition is such a sin as justly to bring upon them the greatest suffering and penalty in this world, may it not possibly reach over to the future, and involve them in like judgments there? An "appalling position" it may well be called; but not more appalling than the premise of which it is the logical consequence, that an inherent disposition or tendency to sin, though not as yet developed in action, is itself sin. If so, then it may be justly treated as such. Calvin was logically consistent in holding the doctrine, and accepting the conclusion; Dr. Woods, logically inconsistent in accepting the doctrine, and rejecting the conclusion.

Nor is Dr. Woods more fortunate in his facts, than in his logic. He does not seem to be aware that any one holds, or has ever held, this appalling doctrine. In the passage last cited, he thinks no "intelligent Christian can be found who maintains" the future misery of infants who have not committed actual sin. And in his earlier letters to Unitarians, he holds the following language: "On this particular point our opinions have been often misrepresented. We are said to hold that God dooms a whole race of innocent creatures to destruction, or considers them all deserving of destruc-

tion, for the sin of one man. Now, when I examine the writings of the earlier Calvinists generally on the subject of original sin, I find nothing which resembles such a statement as this.”<sup>1</sup> Exceptionable language, he admits, may have been used in some cases, and erroneous opinions have sometimes been entertained, “but the Orthodox in New England at the present day,” he thinks, “are not chargeable with the same fault.” Probably not; for they are not chargeable with opinions which would naturally and logically lead to such a conclusion. They do not believe that a native tendency not yet developed in action is itself sin, and therefore deserves to be treated as such. They do not hold that the sin of Adam is, by imputation or otherwise, in any proper sense, the sin of his posterity, so that they may justly be punished for it. But what shall we say of the creeds and confessions already referred to, which do teach at once these doctrines and their logical consequence? What of Calvin himself, as already cited, to the effect that infants may justly be punished for the depravity of nature, irrespective of actual sin? What of the Helvetic Confession, which pronounces the depraved nature to be sin, and *deserving of damnation, even in infants yet unborn*? What of the Thirty-nine Articles, which make original sin the fault of the nature of every man by descent from Adam, and *deserving damnation* as such? What of the Augsburg Confession, which takes essentially the same ground, including imputed along with inherent sin? What of Dr. Hodge and the Princeton divines, who take the same ground? In fine, what shall we say of such distinguished writers as Abelard and Pascal, who go

<sup>1</sup> Letters to Unitarians, page 81, original edition.

further than Calvin, and hold not merely that God justly may, but actually does, condemn to endless misery beings not guilty of actual transgression ?

We have considered in the previous pages the relation of sin to *the nature of man*. It remains to discuss *its relation to the will and purpose of God*.

Account for it as we may, or account for it not at all, the fact remains evident and indisputable. Sin does exist in our world. It is here, and it is here in some way by divine permission. It is here, and God has not prevented its being here. But why not ? Here is the enigma. Looking at the omnipotence of God, we are ready to say he can prevent it if he will. Looking at his benevolence and holiness, we are ready to say he will prevent it if he can. Yet he has not done so.

Various methods of explanation have been attempted by those who have sought to solve this enigma. Two suppositions, however, and only two, are logically possible ; into one or the other of which all the suppositions and theories on the subject virtually resolve themselves. These are :

A. *That God cannot entirely prevent sin.*

B. *That for some reason he does not choose to prevent it.*

As each of these propositions supposes what the other denies, — A, that God chooses to prevent all sin, but cannot ; B, that he can, but chooses not, — they are virtually contradictory of each other ; and as such, by the laws of contradiction and of excluded middle, while they cannot both be true, one or the other must be.

Each, again, may be presented under diverse forms. We may say that God cannot prevent all sin, *a.* in *any*

system; *b.* in a *moral* system. Or, if we adopt the other theory, we may hold that God does not choose to prevent sin, *a.* because its existence is in itself desirable; or *b.* because, though not in itself desirable, it is still the necessary means of the greatest good; or *c.* because, though not in itself tending to good, it may be overruled to that result; or *d.* because, in general terms, its permission will involve less evil than its absolute prevention.

Taking the first theory in its first form, we have this statement:

A. *God cannot prevent all sin* — *a.* in any system. This is possible, supposable, but not probable. His omnipotence is thus essentially surrendered. If he cannot prevent sin in any system which can be devised, — if it is not in his power, in other words, to construct a system from which all sin shall be effectually excluded, — then there is a manifest and essential limit to his power. This may be. But what evidence that it is so? What reason to suppose that the entire prevention of sin is a matter wholly beyond the sphere of the divine power? Might he not have given man a nature, for example, that would wholly have precluded sin? Or, endowing him with the present nature and mental constitution, might he not have kept temptation out of his way, and surrounded him with influences that would certainly have insured his obedience? True, that would not be the *present* system, but it would be a system. Do we know that God could not have done this?

The question is not now whether such a system would be the best — whether it would be a wise and expedient method, or the reverse; but whether it might

not be a possible thing ; whether we know that it would not be possible. The theory under consideration is positive upon this point. The burden of proof rests on those who maintain such a position. In the absence of proof to the contrary, we have a right to infer that the power of God, which we find to be unlimited in other respects, is also unlimited in the matter of the prevention of sin — that he might, if he had chosen, have instituted a system from which moral evil should be wholly excluded.

As stated in its second form, the theory is, that God cannot prevent all sin, *b.* in a *moral* system. Such is the nature, it is supposed, of moral agency, that, under all influences which may be brought to bear upon him, the free agent may still sin, and God cannot prevent it but by destroying his freedom. But can this be proved? Doubtless, in a moral system, it must be in the *power* of the agent to sin if he chooses. But that is not the point. The question is not whether he *can* sin if he pleases, but whether he certainly *will* sin in spite of all influences to the contrary. Whether it is impossible for God to prevent his sinning without taking away his freedom. Of this it seems to us there is no proof. We do not see that there is anything in the nature of moral agency, or a moral system, to forbid the supposition that God, while leaving the power to sin complete in the free agent, may still secure the certainty of an opposite result. Is not the certainty of a given course of action perfectly compatible with power to the contrary? Such, at all events, is the philosophy of those who hold this theory. To say that man may sin, then, because he is a free agent, does not prove that God cannot prevent him from actually sinning, and still

leave him a free agent. The power to sin, and the exercise of that power, are two different things, and the one may exist without the other — the former without the latter.

What evidence, then, that God cannot prevent sin in a moral system? That he *has* not prevented it does not prove that he *can* not. There may be other reasons for his not preventing it besides the want of power to do so.

The supposition that God is unable to keep sin out of a moral system is, to say the least, an improbable one. He can do so many things, that it is certainly fair to presume, in the absence of positive evidence to the contrary, that he can govern moral agents. It is not probable that he would create a system which he could not control — a system which when created must be at once abandoned to moral ruin, or else destroyed. The wisdom of instituting a system, the working of which, in so essential a point, should be beyond his control, would be more than questionable.

Nor does the supposition fully and fairly meet the question before us. Why does God permit sin? we ask. Because he cannot prevent it in a *certain kind* of a system, namely, a *moral* one, is the reply. Very well; then why not adopt some other? Is he shut up to this alone of all possible systems? To reply that a moral system with sin is better than any other system without sin, is to change the ground. It is then, after all, not from want of power to prevent it, but simply as a matter of expediency, that sin is permitted. The debate shifts at once to the second of the two leading theories.

Furthermore, if sin cannot be prevented in a moral



system, then it cannot be prevented in any system. For what is sin? Is it not something pertaining exclusively to moral beings, and so to a moral system? Is sin possible except under a moral system? If so, then, to say that God cannot prevent it in a moral system, is to say that he cannot prevent it at all. If he can prevent sin, then he can prevent it under the only circumstances in which it can possibly occur, namely, in a moral system.

And why not, we ask again — why may not sin be prevented in a moral system? What is the insuperable obstacle? The theory rests on some supposed inability on the part of God to influence the choices of free moral agents so as to secure given results. But of this there is no evidence. Nay, there is abundant evidence to the contrary. It is not true that God cannot influence the choices, and so control the moral conduct of free agents. He can do this. He does it. He kept the holy angels. He keeps good men every day from falling. When the heart of man is renewed by divine grace, when the soul of the believer is purified and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, are not the choices of the man influenced, and is not his conduct controlled by the power that worketh in him, both to will and to do, according to his good pleasure? And is the man the less a free agent because of this influence? Whenever we pray for divine guidance and direction, for the renewing and purifying influences of the Spirit, when we ask to be made better, to be kept from sin, to be led in the way of life, are we not, in fact, asking to be influenced and controlled as to our moral conduct? All such prayer proceeds on the supposition that the moral choices of man are not beyond the reach and

control of Deity. If God can keep the believer from falling into temptation and sin, he could have kept Adam in like manner.

But it may be replied that, while it is possible for God to prevent sin in any particular instance, as in the case of Adam, for example, it might not be possible for him to prevent it entirely. If repressed in one place, it may break out in another. Of this, however, there is no evidence. We do not know that Deity is reduced to any such alternative, having only the choice of time and place, but compelled to admit the incursion of moral evil at some point into his dominions. From the fact that he can and does prevent sin in particular cases, it is fair to presume that he can prevent it in other cases, and in all, if he sees fit. There is no evidence that sin is a necessity of a moral system.

The most that could reasonably be maintained, is that it *may be* that God cannot entirely prevent sin in a moral system. This is the form in which the matter is stated by Dr. Taylor of New Haven.

This, however, does not furnish an explicit answer to the question before us. We ask why God permits sin? To say, *it may be* he could not prevent it in a moral system, does not answer our inquiry, since it is equally true that *it may be* he *could* prevent it. If it cannot be proved that he can, it is equally difficult to prove that he cannot. It is virtually a confession of ignorance — an admission that we do not know.

Now, this may be the best we can do, and all we can do. A positive answer may be out of the power of mortals. Still, when our answer must be conjectural, there may still be a choice of conjectures. Other suppositions there may be with equal, or even greater,

probabilities in their favor. It is not enough, then, to say *it may be* God could not prevent sin in a moral system, and assign that as an answer to the question before us, without first inquiring what reason there is to think that he could not, and whether there is not more reason for thinking that the true answer may lie in another direction. As in reply to the objection against the divine benevolence, which is the use Dr. Taylor makes of it, the statement may suffice. To meet that objection, it may be enough to say we do not know that God *could* have prevented sin in a moral system. The burden of proof then falls on the objector. But in answer to the general question before us, something more explicit is needed than a merely negative and conjectural statement. We ask evidence. We ask wherein this conjecture or possibility is preferable to any one of the many other possible solutions — wherein it is more likely to be the true one than they.

Dr. Taylor argues that because a moral being has the *power* to sin under whatever influences exerted upon him, therefore it *may be* that he *will* sin ; in other words, it may be impossible for God to prevent him.<sup>1</sup> But this does not follow. May there not be a power to sin, and yet a certainty not to sin ? Is it not thus with the holy angels, and with the redeemed in heaven ? Have not good men on earth the power to do many things which it is quite certain they will not do, if they are led by the Spirit of God and kept by divine grace ? Do not the sanctifying influences of the Spirit make the final salvation of the true believer a certain future event, while, at the same time, as all the warnings of Scripture imply, it is possible for him to fall away and

<sup>1</sup> See Lectures on Moral Government, Vol. i. Lectures, viii. ix.

perish? Nay, so far as power is concerned, has not God himself full power to do evil if he chooses, while it is absolutely certain that he will always prefer to do the right? On any other supposition, what becomes of the virtue or rectitude of the divine character? When to any moral being it is no longer a matter of choice, but of simple necessity, what his conduct shall be, — when he has no power to do other than he does, — where lies the morality of his action, and what credit properly pertains to him for virtue and rectitude? But if there may be the power of sinning, and yet the certainty not to sin, then the prevention of sin is not incompatible with the requisitions of a moral system. It does not follow that a moral being *will* sin because he *can*, or that there is no way of preventing a given moral act but by rendering that act impossible. When God keeps a good man from some form of transgression into which he might otherwise fall, he does it by influences bearing upon the choice, and not by taking away from the man the power of sinning. When he keeps Peter or Paul from utter apostasy, he does it not by depriving them of the power of falling away. But if men may be prevented from actually sinning while still having the power to sin, then it is not out of the power of God to prevent sin in a moral system.

Whether it would be, on the whole, better to prevent it, in other words, whether it could be prevented in the *best* system, may still admit of question. This point Dr. Taylor proceeds to discuss in his second argument, assuming the position that it may be God cannot prevent all sin in the *best* moral system. This is equivalent, however, to saying that he does not *choose* to prevent it, and finds its place, therefore,

properly under our second general theory. The supposition now is that God chooses the best system ; and, as sin is incidental to that system, he chooses to permit the sin rather than adopt another system. In other words, he regards its permission as involving less evil than would result from its absolute prevention. This proposition will be considered in its place.

Since it cannot be shown that God cannot prevent sin, we must seek the solution of our problem in the other direction.

B. *For some reason he did not choose to prevent it.*

a. Inasmuch as its existence is in itself desirable. This, however, can hardly be. Sin is never, *per se*, a desirable thing, but always hateful, and that only. God can have seen in it, in itself considered, nothing to recommend it. Otherwise, if it were a thing to be for any reason desired, and preferred to holiness in its place, God could no longer properly hate it, nor consistently forbid it. The supposition, therefore, that God did not choose to prevent sin because its existence is in itself desirable, while logically possible, is morally impossible, and may be dismissed without further comment.

b. Inasmuch as it is the *necessary means of the greatest good*. This is supposable. It is quite possible that sin, while not in itself desirable, may still be the means of good ; possible, even, that it may be the avenue by which the greatest good can be most directly reached ; possible that in no other way could God accomplish so much good to the universe as by the permission of sin in it. Such is the theory ; and it has seemed to a large class of minds, eminent for wisdom and piety, to be the most satisfactory solution of our problem.

Thoroughly convinced of the benevolence of God, and still met on every side with the palpable and gloomy fact of sin, it has seemed to them that somehow this fact must be no exception to the sublime rule of the divine benevolence — that somehow the goodness of God was at work, in and through this very gloom and darkness of sin, to bring about results of beneficence not otherwise attained. And, indeed, so much as this we must admit, or abandon the problem as a hopeless task. Doubtless the benevolence of God is somehow concerned in the permission of sin; somehow at work to bring about the best results from that permission. The question is, *how?* whether directly, through the instrumentality of sin as a direct means of good, and a more efficient means than any other; or indirectly and in some other way. Is sin, *per se*, the means of good? Is it the means of greatest good? Is it the necessary means of greatest good? These questions must be answered in the affirmative by the advocates of this theory; but on what grounds these answers can be maintained it is difficult to perceive. How can it be shown that sin has any tendency whatever to good? Are not all its tendencies evil, and toward evil? Left to its own natural working, would it ever result in good? If not in good, how in the greatest good? And how is it not only the means, but the necessary means, of that greatest good?

Moreover, if it be, as now affirmed, the necessary means of greatest good, then is not God bound, as a benevolent being, not only to permit, but even to encourage, nay, to require and demand it? At all events, not to forbid it? But he does forbid it, and require holiness in its place. According to the theory,



he requires what is really not for the best good of the universe, and forbids what is really the most direct and efficient means of good to the greatest number. What shall we say of his benevolence in making such a requisition ; or of his wisdom in contriving such an awkward and back-handed system ?

This theory, closely examined, differs not essentially from the preceding ; since, if sin is in reality the direct and necessary means of the highest good, it is impossible to show why it is not in reality a thing to be desired, and to be more desired than anything else in its place. The greatest good is always a proper object of desire ; and if we may rightfully desire any given end, we may also rightfully desire the means necessary to the attainment of that end.

c. Inasmuch as it can be overruled to good. God permits sin for the sake of overruling it, and bringing good out of it. It is a mark of wisdom to be able to turn a disadvantage to an advantage, and out of apparent defeat to organize ultimate and real victory. God shows his wisdom and power in baffling all the designs of Satan, and making even the malignant forces of evil march in the van of his own sublime purposes.

This may be so. But is it wisdom to introduce, or suffer to be introduced, a difficulty for the sake of overcoming it, a disease for the sake of checking it, a rebellion for the sake of subduing it ? It is wise and well to heal the disorder ; but would it not have been wiser and better to have prevented it ? It is well and wise to put the fire out ; but is it wise to set the house on fire for the sake of putting it out ? What shall we say of the military leader who purposely allows defeat and disaster to overtake him in order to show how well

purpose and its legitimate results, than would have accrued from its absolute prevention; or, to revert to the figure already employed, that the patient is absolutely better for having had the disease. This is certainly supposable, but a proposition not easily to be established; nor do we perceive how, in case such a position could be maintained, it would be possible to avoid the conclusion that sin is really a thing to be thankful for, as being the occasion of the highest good, even as the patient has reason to be thankful for the disorder which has resulted in his improved condition. True, it is not the disorder itself, but the remedies used to counteract it, which have wrought the improvement. Still, as those remedies would not have been employed but for the disease, the patient is really indebted to the latter as the occasion of his receiving the benefit, and in one sense the cause of it.

*d.* Inasmuch as its permission, under the present checks and counteractions, will involve less evil than its absolute prevention; in other words, because God saw that, all things considered, it was better to permit sin, under its present restrictions, than to do more than he is doing to prevent it. Not that it would be impossible to prevent it; but that the system or plan which should absolutely exclude it would not, on the whole, be so good a plan as the present one. Why, or in what respect it would not be as good; wherein the measures necessary for the entire exclusion of sin might be the occasion of more evil than its admission under present limitations, the theory does not undertake to decide. The statement is general, rather than specific. We do not know, and therefore we do not say, according to this hypothesis, precisely what the

reason is that sin cannot be absolutely prevented without, on the whole, doing more harm than is done by its present permission. Whether the difficulty lies in some peculiarity of moral agency or a moral system, rendering it unwise to modify essentially the present method of dealing with the evil, or whether it lies in some other direction, we do not know. Enough that to the divine mind some such reason does appear. Enough that, all things considered, he perceives it to be not for the best to do more than he is doing to prevent sin. Enough that such a supposition is possible and is reasonable. More definite than this we need not be, and cannot be, with any certainty. So much as this, at least, we must maintain in order to vindicate the divine wisdom and goodness.

We see enough of God's holiness and hatred of sin to warrant the conclusion that he would prevent it if he could do so consistently and wisely; if, in other words, it would be for the best to do so. The fact that he has not prevented it, is *prima facie* evidence that it would not be for the best — that he could not in that way secure the best results. Of his wisdom, his holiness, his goodness, we have positive and sufficient evidence. We have, on the other hand, no evidence that the entire prevention of sin would have been attended with better results, all things taken into the account than its permission under all the checks and safeguards of the present system. We do not know that it would have been wise and good to have done more than he has done to prevent it. That being the case the holiness and benevolence of Deity stand fully vindicated, and the question why is sin permitted by a good and wise and holy God, is answered, so far

it is possible for man to answer it in his present state of being.

Is sin, then, for the best? No; but the non-prevention of sin may be for the best. It is not sin, but the purpose on the part of God not to do more than he is doing to prevent sin, that is for the best. It is the peculiarity of the present theory that it presents sin, not as a good, nor as the means of good, much less the necessary means of good; but rather as an evil, and that wholly and continually; while at the same time it supposes that there may be a greater evil than the present amount of sin under the conditions of the present system. It puts the existence of sin, not in the light of a greater good, but only of a lesser evil. Is not that the true aspect in which to view it? It supposes it quite possible that to place man under the influences of a moral system, with freedom of action, exposure to temptation, motives to obedience, with all the safeguards that are thrown around him in the shape of precept, warning, and persuasion, such and so many, but no more, may be better than either to change the system entirely, or even to multiply the motives to right action. Who will say that this may not be so?

Does God, then, prefer sin to holiness, all things considered? By no means. He hates sin, looks upon it never with complacency, prefers it never to holiness. It is not good, nor is it a means of good. But he prefers to suffer it, rather than to make such changes in the whole system of things as might be necessary in order to keep sin entirely out. He does not prefer sin to holiness; but he prefers the lesser of two evils — sin under the present system to what might be in its place.

He does not prefer tares to wheat in his field ; but he prefers the present status of wheat along with tares, rather than a condition of things in which there should be no tares and no wheat, or even no tares and less wheat.

But here we shall be told that God is not limited in his operations to a choice of evils. His method is perfect. It would not be perfect, if it took sin into the account as part of the general system. Sin is not of God. This is the position taken by Professor Squier, in his work entitled "The Problem Solved." The attempt is made to rule out the fact of sin from the system of divine government, as something in no way pertaining to the divine method or purpose, not included in his plan—something which has forced itself in from without, and for which God is no way responsible. To this we reply : Sin is in the system ; and the question is, How came it there ? It is here, a great portentous fact, not to be ruled out or ignored by any artifice. It is here, and must have come in, in some sense, by divine permission. Its coming in must have been foreseen by the omniscient Ruler, and taken into the account. And now the question is : Why was this foreseen approaching evil allowed to introduce itself into God's perfect system ? This is the real question ; and it is virtually, not to say studiously, ignored by Professor Squier. One of three things he must say in answer to this question. Either its coming was unforeseen on the part of God ; or, foreseeing, he was unable to prevent it ; or, for reasons relating to the general good, he did not choose to prevent it. If unforeseen, the fault lies with the divine omniscience. A wise prudence or sagacity should have kept better

guard over the new creation. If, foreseeing the coming evil, he was unable to prevent it, his omnipotence is at fault; and we have now the spectacle of the Supreme Being standing at the door of his new world, besom in hand, vainly striving to keep out the in-rushing tide. If, for wise reasons he does not choose to exclude the evil, then he permits it. The latter is the only really tenable position.

To this Professor Squier himself must ultimately be driven; since he must admit that it was at least in God's power to keep out sin by not creating moral beings, and that he can at any moment put an end to it, if in no other way, by destroying the system. He must admit that when God chose to create such beings, he did it with the full knowledge that they would sin. It was for him to decide whether a race of moral beings who would certainly sin should exist or not, that is, whether sin should exist or not; and he decided that question in the affirmative.

It avails nothing now to say, with Professor Squier, that sin is not of God; that his plan does not embrace it, nor his eternal purpose take it in; that his way is perfect, and can have nothing to do with evil in any form. Here are the facts. The question is: Why is sin allowed to break in from without into the divine system? Why is such an inroad permitted? This is the real problem; and, with all deference to the title of the work, we beg leave to say that this little problem is not solved by the statements of Professor Squier. It is not even touched by him. As against the position that God is the originator and author of sin, — that he purposes it in the sense of contriving, procuring, becoming the efficient cause of it, — the reasoning of Pro-



fessor Squier is perfectly valid ; and this would seem to have been the shape in which the matter lay before his mind. But that is not the question really at issue ; nor is such the position of those who maintain the divine permission of sin.

To return to the theory under discussion. The difference between the theory now stated and the doctrine that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, may be thus illustrated. Among the elementary ingredients of the air which we breathe is a certain gas, deleterious, nay, fatal, to human lungs, if inhaled by itself, which nevertheless, in combination with other elements, becomes useful, insomuch that the air is positively better with it than without it. It is there, not because God could not have created an atmosphere into which it should not enter, but it is there as essential to the best atmosphere. It is the necessary means of the greatest good. What nitrogen is to the atmosphere, such is sin to the general system of the universe.

But, says the objector, if this is so, how is it that God hates this nitrogen, and pronounces it bad, and only bad, and forbids most absolutely all creatures to breathe it, or to breathe anything into which it enters, or to have anything whatever to do with it except to shun and abhor it ? Hardly consistent, this !

In place of such a theory, he would prefer the following : Here is a block of marble, perfect in color and fineness and form, suitable every way for the purposes of the artist, save that in one place a stain has stricken through it, marring its otherwise snowy whiteness. This stain is, in truth, a serious defect. The marble were much better without it. To remove it,

however, might be productive of greater injury to the marble than to suffer it to remain. On the whole, I choose this block as it is — choose it even in preference to other blocks that are without the stain, as on the whole superior to the others — choose it notwithstanding the defect, and in spite of it, not for the sake of it, nor for any good the stain will do, not to show my skill in removing it, not because I prefer the stain in itself considered to the absence of the same, but simply because, all things considered, this block, defective as it is, is better than any other which is presented to my choice. Sin is that stain on the best system; admitted, not for its own sake, and not as means of good, but for the sake of the system to which it pertains; suffered to remain, because the means necessary to its extirpation might be productive of a greater evil in its stead.

But this, it will be said, limits the power of God. In a sense it does, and so do all theories which can be offered — this no more than the others. If we say that God could not have prevented sin in any system, or in any moral system, we directly limit his power. If we say he admits it for the sake of overruling it to greater good, we go on the supposition that he cannot secure that greater good as directly and as well, in any other way. If we say it is the necessary means of the greatest good, the very term “necessary” sets a limit, at once and positively, to the divine power. We no longer imply, but affirm, that it is out of the power of God to reach the proposed end by any other method. In fine, proceed as we will, we come upon essentially the same ground. On any theory there is this limitation, at least, that in the nature of things some methods of procedure and some systems are preferable to others,

even for the Deity — that he can accomplish better results by certain means and methods, than by others ; by the present system, for example, than by one from which sin should be wholly excluded. At least all theories under B stand upon this as essentially their common ground, and no one of them has a right to charge the other with limiting the divine power, while itself stands equally exposed to the same charge. As between the general theories A and B, there is, indeed, this difference, that the former regards the prevention of sin as beyond the power of God, and so directly limits his omnipotence ; while the latter only supposes it out of his power to prevent sin and still secure the best results. But as between the several specific theories under B there is no such difference. To say that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good just as really imposes a limit to the divine method of operation as to say that the permission of sin involves, on the whole, less evil than would result from its absolute prevention. The difference is that, in the one case, the advantage of the system is attributed directly to sin itself as the means of good ; in the other, it is an advantage attained in spite of sin. In the one case, the introduction of sin is viewed as a positive good ; in the other, only as the lesser of evils. In either case the prevention of sin is supposed to be in the power of, God, but not to be, on the whole, for the best. Each supposes that in the nature of things some methods are preferable to others. So far as this, and no farther, does either limit the power of God. To say that the permission of sin may involve less evil than its absolute prevention, and on this account God did not choose to prevent it, is the same thing as to say that he cannot

prevent sin in the best system. But we do not understand it to be the prerogative of Omnipotence to render all methods and measures equally advantageous. Even to Omnipotence there may and must still be a choice.

And here it may be asked: Is God, then, less happy because sin is in the world? If its admission is merely a choice of evils, as now represented, — if he permits it not as an instrument of good, but merely as the occasion of less harm than would result from its entire exclusion, then it may well be that sin, though suffered to exist, is still an object of displeasure and abhorrence to the divine mind. Its existence, therefore, so far from contributing to his happiness, can only detract from it. Indeed, how can it be otherwise? Every act of disobedience on the part of the subject must necessarily be displeasing, in the highest degree, to the infinitely pure and holy God. And is he not less happy when displeased, than when pleased?

This seems to place the happiness of God in the hand of the sinner. It puts it in the power of any moral being to add to or detract from the sum total of the divine happiness, according as he shall choose to obey or disobey the divine precepts. This is indeed a tremendous power. We may well shrink from a conclusion so fearful. But is it not, after all, an inevitable result of all moral agency? Is it not a power which Deity confers on all his creatures, when he makes them moral beings, and endows them with the fearful attribute of freedom? Is it in the power of man or angel to sin against God, and not displease and offend him by so doing? Would not the obedience, from this moment onward, of all created beings be infinitely more agreeable to the divine will, and in all respects more pleasing

to him than their disobedience, under the present moral system? There can be but one answer to such a question. As the earth in all her course casts her broad pyramid of shadow far behind her along the heavens, so sin involves not only the transgressor himself in the gloom of eternal night, but sends its shadow afar among the divine purposes. That shadow falls upon the celestial pavements, trembles upon the sea of glass, touches even the eternal throne.

## VI.

### ARIANISM — THE NATURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE VIEWS HELD BY THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS RESPECTING THE SONSHIP AND DIVINITY OF CHRIST.<sup>1</sup>

GREAT errors seldom spring into existence of a sudden. Their roots run to a distance in the soil that gives them birth. They are the development of tendencies, the natural outgrowth and result of causes, that have been long at work, unobserved, it may be, and silently, but surely. They come to the light as those coral reefs of the southern ocean — work of a myriad toilers of the sea, building unseen in its depths, lifting, little by little, to the surface the foundations of an island or a continent. So come most errors into being. If you would trace their origin, you find it far away from the spot where they make their first definite appearance, hidden among the foundations of things.

That form of doctrinal error termed Arianism is no exception to this rule. Its roots run far back into the first centuries, and the earliest opinions of the Christian church. It is the natural development of the views widely held by the early church Fathers respecting the sonship of Christ. This I shall endeavor to show.

We shall best approach the subject by defining at the outset, as clearly as may be, the distinctive features

<sup>1</sup> A paper read before the Alumni Institute of Chicago Theological Seminary, at its session in October, 1866.



of that form of error whose origin we seek to trace. The one distinctive and essential feature of Arianism, as opposed to the Trinitarian faith, is clearly this: the wholly *subordinate* character which it assigns to the Logos, or the Son, prior to his incarnation. While the Trinitarian holds the Logos, or Christ in his pre-existent state, to be really and truly God — one in substance with the Father, equal in power and glory, — the Arian makes him not only numerically distinct in substance, but *dependent, derived, subordinate*, a being whose existence is not eternal. Whatever tends, then, to assign the Logos in his original nature a place or character subordinate to that of the Father, tends just in that degree toward Arianism.

It becomes, then, an important inquiry, what were the views of the early Christian teachers and Fathers of the church on this subject. Which of the two different modes of thought and expression — that which conceives of the Logos as absolutely equal with the Father, or that which conceives of him as subordinate and derived — was the one generally prevalent in the early church? If, on inquiry, we find the latter to have been the predominant view, we shall no longer be at a loss to account for the rise and spread of that peculiar form of error known as the Arian heresy.

I propose to show that such was the fact — that the essential feature of Arianism, as now stated, — that is, the *essential and original subordination* of the Logos to the Father, — was a doctrine prevalent in the Christian church long before the Arian heresy in its more definite form appeared; and that, even in the controversy which then arose, and which distracted the civilized world for centuries as no other religious controversy

ever did, both as regards the fierceness and continuance of the struggle, the *full* and *absolute* Deity of the Logos, in the sense in which the modern Trinitarian views the matter, was not held even by the adherents of the Athanasian faith.

To show this, I shall appeal first to the leading church Fathers preceding the Council of Nice; next, to that Council itself, as finding expression in its creed or definite formulary of faith, put forth after thorough discussion, and also in the illustrations, explanations, and arguments employed by its leading advocates in the statements and defence of that creed; and I shall appeal finally to the subsequent defenders of the Nicene doctrine, from the Council of Chalcedon and the leading church Fathers of that period, to its later advocates in more modern times.

1. And first, let us inquire of the leading church teachers *previous* to the Council of Nice. Did they teach the full, supreme, absolute divinity of the Logos, or his divinity only in some secondary and subordinate sense.

When we speak of God, we mean by that word to denote — what? A being self-existent, independent of all other beings and things, infinite in duration, power, and knowledge, the first cause of all things. We mean that such a being is; *one* such; and that one being we call God. When we say that Christ before his incarnation, the Logos, was *really* and *truly* God, we mean, if we mean anything, that he was this being, self-existent, independent, and infinite. The question now is, did the Christian Fathers prior to the Council of Nice thus hold and teach? When they speak of one God, self-existent, infinite, first cause, do they mean

to include in this term the Logos as really as the Father, or do they mean the Father only, and regard the Logos as really a distinct being from the former — a being, however exalted and divine, yet in some respects subordinate to the former. The question admits of but one reply.

What says Justin Martyr? The Logos, he holds, is different from the Father, numerically — *ἕτερον ἀριθμῶ*. The Father is God invisible, and therefore a different person or being from the God who appeared to Abraham, which latter was the Son or Logos. The unity or oneness of the two is merely a oneness of will or sentiment (See Dialogue with Trypho the Jew.) In common with other Christian teachers of the time, Justin Martyr held that the Logos was not originally and eternally a distinct hypostasis, but was in the Father as the divine reason or intelligence, and that when God said, "Let there be light," then the reason, previously dwelling as a thought in the divine mind, and now uttered in words, became the Logos — a substance — a separate, animate, rational being — the Son of the Father. Of course such a being is neither self-existent, independent, or eternal; nor is he one with God in any proper sense, but a being numerically distinct. He comes forth from the Father, derives his being from him, — and that in time, that is, at the creation of the world, — and is Deity only in a secondary and subordinate sense. Such, also, are the views of Theophilus and Tatian.

Clement of Alexandria shall be our next witness. Clement, indeed, admits the existence of the Logos as a hypostasis prior to the creation, but in such a way as involves both numerical distinction of substance, and

the dependence of the Logos, as a derived being, on the will of the Father. He is the copy of the Father — *θεὸς ἐκ θεοῦ* — God from God.

Tertullian,<sup>1</sup> in his treatise against Praxeus, represents the Son as a portion and derivation from the substance of the Father. The Father is the whole substance; the Son a derivation and portion of the whole. The Father is other and greater than the Son. They are called one as respects the unity, resemblance, conjunction, the delight of the Father, the obedience of the Son. The Son is likened to the fruit upon a tree, to the stream issuing from a fountain, and to the radiance from the sun.

Origen<sup>2</sup> holds that the Son and Spirit originate in the will of the Father and are subordinate to him. The unity is that of will, harmony of design and purpose, co-operation and agreement, not that of substance or being. This he wholly rejects. The Father is the source of all being: the Son is second and inferior; and the Spirit is inferior to both, his operation being limited to the church.

Dyonisius of Alexandria, pupil of Origen, regards the Son as the creation and work of the Father, as the ship is the work of the builder, having neither the same nature or essence. From this extreme view he afterwards retracts.

Gregory Thaumaturgus also calls the Son a creation — *κτίσις*.

Such seem to have been the prevailing views of the church teachers and Fathers previous to the Council of Nice. They grew naturally out of the peculiar circumstances of the time. In their zeal against the Sabellian heresy, which merged all distinction of person

<sup>1</sup> *Contra Praxeus*, cap. ii. 8, 9.

<sup>2</sup> *De Princip.* I. cap. 8.

or hypostasis, the Fathers went over to the opposite extreme, losing sight of the unity of essence, and making the Logos a being numerically distinct from and subordinate to the Monas. That which is true of the Son as incarnate—the God-man—God manifest in the flesh,—that he is numerically distinct from and subordinate to the Father,—they applied to the Logos in his original state, prior to incarnation.

2. Passing now to the Nicene Council itself, it seems hardly to admit of question that, with all its zeal against Arianism and in defence of the true divinity of Christ, it neither held the doctrine of *numerical unity of being*, nor *full equality* of the Son with the Father. The difference between the two is brought out prominently, and lies upon the very face of the creed put forth by the Council as expressive of its views: "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things seen and unseen; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, begotten of the Father," etc. The one God, then, of the Nicene Creed is the Father, and is plainly and manifestly distinct from the being subsequently named, namely, the one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is spoken of as θεὸν ἐκ θεοῦ—God from God, and φῶς ἐκ φωτός—light from light,—a derived, and not self-existent and independent being. True, it is a begotten and not created being, and begotten of the substance of the Father,—in these respects the error of the Arian heresy is fully met,—but nevertheless a being *distinct* from the one God first named, *derived* from him, and *subordinate* to him. In distinction from the Arian view, and from that of many of the Fathers already cited, this creed represents the Son as begotten, not by the will of the Father, but by necessity of his



nature, so that there was never a period when it could be said he was not. When Eusebius the historian hesitated to subscribe to the expressions, ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς, and ὁμοούσιος τῷ πατρί, he was assured that by these expressions was simply meant that the Son was wholly unlike any created being, and that he originated, not from any other being in substance, but only from the Father. This was unquestionably the point which the Nicene Fathers had chiefly in view. They set themselves strongly in opposition to the Arian tenet that the Son was a created being, and as such originating in time. This they strongly deny; but there is no evidence that they held the numerical unity of substance or being of the Son and the Father, or the full equality of the former with the latter. No doubt they really believed the Son and Spirit to be truly God; but when they call the Son ὁμοούσιος with the Father, they mean simply that the two have a common nature, — share the Godhead in common, — and not that he is self-existent and independent, or numerically one and the same being with the Father. This they nowhere affirm; but, on the contrary, by express statement as well as by implication, deny it. The Father and Son are one, in their view, as belonging to a common genus—individuals under a particular class or species, namely, that of Deity. This was the point mainly in dispute with the Arians, who placed the Son not in the rank of Deity, but assigned him to the class of created beings.

If we look now at the views of those who were the leaders among the Nicene Fathers, and may therefore be taken as the exponents of the real meaning of the creed itself, we find them precisely as now stated.



The self-existence, independence, numerical unity of being, and absolute equality of the Son with the Father, they certainly do not hold.

Athanasius, the great leader of the Nicene Council, and of the Trinitarian party, distinctly recognizes the *οὐσία*, the *essence* or *substance* of the Son as distinct from that of the Father, and the offspring of it — *γέννημα οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς*. The one is an *οὐσία γέννητος*; the other an *οὐσία ἀγέννητος*. The Son is derived, then, as to his *essence* or *substance*, from the substance of the Father, and is, of course, not numerically one with him as to being, not self-existent, not independent, not equal; for that which begets is in the nature of the case, in so far, at least, superior to that which is begotten. Athanasius in one passage uses the term *ὁμοφυής* as equivalent to *ὁμοούσιος*, that is, *of the same nature*, an expression applicable to all individuals possessing a common nature, and belonging to the same genus, as all men or all animals. (See his *Treatise de Synodis*, p. 923.)

Gregory Nazianzen denies numerical unity, and understands by the unity of the Godhead only agreement of purpose and operation. Though they differ in number, they are not divided in power. The persons of the Godhead are *ὁμοούσιοι*, just as Adam, Eve, and Seth were *ὁμοούσιοι*, that is, as possessing a *common nature*. The Trinity is like three suns shining with combined light. (Opp. I. pp. 562, 598.)

Basil the Great says the advocates of the Nicene Creed acknowledge a God who is one, *not in number, but in nature* — *οὐκ ἀρίθμῳ ἀλλὰ τῇ φύσει* (iii. p. 81). He explains the word *ὁμοούσιον* as denoting simply *unity of rank*, or the same *dignity of nature*, with the

Father, and says the word was chosen for this purpose by the Nicene Fathers.

To the same effect Gregory of Nyssa. The name God with him is a *generic* idea, denoting the whole divine nature which the different persons share in common; so that there are not three gods, but only one. This is illustrated by reference to Peter, Paul, and Barnabas, who, he says, are not three *οὐσῆαι*, but only one, and are called three men only by a figure of speech or abuse of language. (Cur non tres Dii sunt, p. 447.)

When Chrysostom, then, calls Adam and Eve *ὁμοούσιοι*, that is, of the same nature, and says that children are *ὁμοούσιοι* with their parents, by way of illustrating the relation of the Son to the Father, it is evident that he understands by the term just what the Fathers already cited understood by it—the participation of different individuals in a common nature. If, in addition to this, they have the same power and glory, as Hilary taught, and are harmonious in purpose and co-operative in action, as the Nicene Fathers generally held, this constitutes all the unity that is to be ascribed to God. So they believed and taught.

Athanasius himself uses almost the same form of expression to illustrate the unity of the Godhead which we have just cited from Gregory and Chrysostom. “We men,” he says, “consisting of a body and a soul, are all *μίας φύσεως καὶ οὐσίας*, of one nature and essence; but we are many persons.” Are we, then, all *one man*? it might be asked.

The same mode of illustration is employed by some of the modern defenders of the Nicene Creed. Thus Hooker, in his Ecclesiastical Polity: “As no man but

Peter can be the person which Peter is, yet Paul hath the self-same nature which Peter hath. Again, angels have every one of them the nature of pure and invisible spirits; but every angel is not that angel which appeared in a dream to Joseph.”<sup>1</sup> It would seem to follow from this that, as the unity or oneness of substance of the Father and Son consists in their having a common nature, — namely, the *divine* nature or *οὐσία*, — and as all men, in like manner, have a common *οὐσία*; — namely, the *human* — and all angels, in the same manner, a common *οὐσία*, — namely, the *angelic*, — there is just the same reason and propriety, and no more, in calling the Son and the Father one God that there is in calling Peter and Paul one man, or all angels one angel. The divine unity vanishes, in this way, in a mere figure of speech.

3. Passing now from the Nicene Council and its prominent leaders and defenders to those who in later times have advocated the same general views, we find the Council of Chalcedon, one hundred and twenty-six years after that of Nice, adopting the same creed, and proposing to make it a finality. That they did not understand the term *ὁμοούσιος* to denote numerical oneness of being, but only homogeneousness or sameness of nature, is evident from the fact that they affirm that Christ is as to his humanity *ὁμοούσιος with us*.

In a word, nothing can be plainer than that the early Fathers, both before and at and after the Nicene Council, regarded the Father only as *αὐτόθεος*, self-existent; while the Son and Spirit were derived and subordinate — one with the Father, not in being, but only as possessing the same generic nature, and agreeing in pur-

<sup>1</sup> Eccl. Pol. v. 51. See also Shedd's Hist. Doct. i. p. 346.

pose and action. In his defence of the Nicene Creed, Bishop Bull, citing numerous passages from the Nicene Fathers as authority, holds the following language: "The Father only possesses this divine nature *of himself*; but the Son from the Father. Hence the Father is the fountain, origin, and beginning, *fons, origo, et principium*, of the divinity which is in the Son." The Greek Fathers, as he shows, speak of the Father as *αἴτιος τοῦ υἱοῦ*, author of the Son, and *αἴτιον τοῦ εἶναι*, author of his being; while the Latin Fathers call him *auctor, radix, fons, caput*.

The catholic doctors who wrote previously to the synod, as well as those who wrote after it, he says, approved the decision of the Council that the Son is *θεὸς ἐκ θεοῦ*. "For they all with one breath taught that the divine nature and perfections belong to the Father and Son, not collaterally or co-ordinately, but *subordinately*, that is to say, that the Son has the same divine nature in common with the Father, but communicated by the Father. . . . Hence the Father is the fountain, origin, and principium of the divinity which is in the Son." He affirms, also, that these teachers all agree in the belief "that God the Father is greater than God the Son, *even as regards divinity*," that is, as he explains, "in respect to dignity or origin; since the Son is from the Father, and not the Father from the Son."

Professor Shedd,<sup>1</sup> indeed, seeks to qualify this by saying that Bull means only that the person or personal peculiarity of the Father is superior to the person of the Son. But Bull is talking not of person, but of *divinity*, which is not a peculiarity of the person, but

<sup>1</sup> Hist. Doct. i. p. 889.

of the being or nature — the *οὐσία*, and not the *ὑπόστασις*.

Not to pursue our inquiries further, it is perfectly evident that the early Christian Fathers, both before and after the Council of Nice, while they believed in the real divinity of Christ, and were neither Arians nor intentionally tritheists, still did not regard the Son as originally and prior to the incarnation one and the same being with the Father, but, on the contrary, numerically distinct; did not regard him as *αὐτόθεος*, self-existent and independent, but, on the contrary, a being derived from, and therefore dependent on, the Father. Their oneness is simply sameness of nature, and harmony of feeling and purpose. It is hardly necessary to say, that this distinction of essence or being conflicts with the true and proper unity of God, and this derivation and dependence with the true and proper divinity of the Son. A derived and dependent God, a secondary God, a God not self-existent, is to the truly Christian mind no God. I care not whether he be eternal or a creature of time — if not self-existent and independent, he is not truly God; if not one with the Father in being, and equal in power and glory, he is not truly God.

But when we make the Father the *fons et principium* of Deity, when we make him the producing cause of the second and third persons or hypostases, — the *auctor et origo*, the *αἴτιον τοῦ εἶναι*, the author of the being or essence of the Son and Spirit, — do we not at once elevate him far above the Son and Spirit in power and glory? And for us to say afterward that they are equal does not make them so. If derived and dependent, they are not equal. For us to say that they are, is simply to contradict ourselves.

Nor does it materially relieve the case to introduce the distinction which later theologians have made between hypostasis or personality, and essence or being, and to say that the Father is the author of the personality of the Son and Spirit, but not of their essence — a view maintained by the modern advocates of the Nicene Creed, Professor Shedd among the latest. For, in the first place, nothing is plainer than that the Nicene Fathers made no such distinctions, and intended no such thing. The terms *οὐσία* and *ὑπόστασις* were then used as synonymous, both being equivalent to the Latin *substantia*. They are employed as synonymous in the creed itself; the later distinction, by which hypostasis came to denote appearance or personality, in distinction from substance, not being then known. The Nicene Fathers, from Athanasius downward, distinctly affirm not that the hypostasis or personality, but that the substance, the *οὐσία*, of the Son is begotten, and that from the substance or *οὐσία* of the Father. This we have already sufficiently established. But even if it were not so, I do not see that the difficulty is essentially relieved by the distinction now made. For whether it be the essence, or only the personality of the Son that is produced or derived, he is still, *in so far forth as he is derived*, not an independent, self-existent being, and certainly not equal in power and glory to the Father from whom his personality is derived. To the latter still belongs the power and glory of begetting or producing the Son, as respects, at least, his personality; and the greater the power and glory we attribute to the second person, the greater the power and glory of begetting that person, and so the greater the difference between the two.



As the result of our investigations, then, we are compelled to the conclusion, that there was in the prevalent mode of thinking and speaking of Christ in the early period of the church, both before and after the Council of Nice, that which really involved the essential principle of Arianism, which found its natural development in that form of error, and which, with all their opposition to Arianism, still pervaded the Nicene Creed and the opinions of its advocates.

The essence of Arianism, as Professor Stuart well remarks, "consisted in maintaining that Christ was a being in some respects inferior to God, and created in time; in other words, that he was a derived, dependent being, and therefore neither infinite nor eternal. The great rallying-point was that he was a *created* being. On this, by deduction, all the rest of Arius's positions depended. This position the Nicene Fathers, in the most express and direct manner possible, often and earnestly contradicted. We ought in justice to allow their disclaimer or contradiction. But what did they substitute in the room of an origin by *creation*? They substituted *generation*, and (by implication) *eternal* generation, inasmuch as they anathematize all who say, *ἦν πότε οὐκ ἦν*. Where, then, are we now? We are simply in this predicament, namely, we have passed from the camp of those who maintain a beginning of the Son's existence in time and by creation, and gone over to the camp of those who declare that there is no definite time or limitation as to the beginning of the Son's existence, and that he was not created, but begotten. It is well; but we may still inquire, How much have we gained by this transition? . . . . All that the Nicene symbol does is to deny one mode of

production, — namely, that by creation, as asserted by the Arians, — and to put another in its stead. *Production* or *generation*, applied fully and directly to the Saviour's divine nature, is what the Nicene Fathers meant most explicitly to declare. . . . . Both Arius and his opponents, then, virtually acknowledge the derivation and dependence of the Son. They divide and dispute and anathematize each other because of different opinions about the mode of his derivation ; and the dispute was principally concerning this. . . . . For myself I feel compelled to say, that, although I view the Nicene Creed as a nearer approach than Arianism to the Scripture doctrine concerning the Son, inasmuch as it maintains that he is eternal, yet on the great point of self-existence and independence, those indispensable and essential attributes of Godhead, what there is to choose between Arianism and Nicenism I wot not."<sup>1</sup>

The tendency of the views now stated is to serious error, and that in a twofold direction. On the one hand, the subordination of the Son, as a dependent and derived being, secondary to the Father, and proceeding from him, tends logically to a denial of the true and proper divinity of Christ, and is, as we have seen, the parent root of Arianism. On the other hand, the denial of the numerical unity of being in the Godhead, the resolving it, as we have seen, into mere agreement and co-operation of different individuals sharing a common divine nature, tends directly to polytheism. For if this be all that is meant by the cardinal doctrine of the divine unity, no reason can be shown why the same unity might not be so extended as to embrace any

<sup>1</sup> Remarks on the Nicene Creed, in Biblical Repository, April, 1835.

number of deities — even all the gods of Grecian and Roman mythology. Nay, it is polytheism in the definite shape of tritheism. The Father is one God, *fons et principium divinitatis*; the Son and Spirit, distinct beings from the Father, are also each really and truly God — the three sharing the divine nature in common — one Godhead, but three Gods; just as there is one human nature, one manhood, but any number of men. True, the three divine beings are *ὁμοούσιοι*, of the same substance or nature; but so also are the human father and the human son, according to the same Nicene teachers. Nay, so are all men *ὁμοούσιοι*, of one substance or nature, namely, the human. The unity of God resolves itself into a unity of the divine nature; and the Father, Son, and Spirit are one only as Peter, Paul, and Barnabas are one, or all men are one.

But I must not prolong the discussion. The student who is disposed to pursue the subject further will find it to his purpose to study the writings of the Fathers immediately preceding and subsequent to the Council of Nice, particularly the writings of Athanasius. In addition to the standard historians, Neander, Giesler, Guericke, and others, Stanley's *History of the Eastern Church*, Munscher's *Dogmen-geschichte*, and Bull's *Defence of the Nicene Creed*, particularly the two latter works, will put him in possession of the materials and authorities requisite for a full examination. There is also a very thorough investigation of the subject by Schleiermacher, which was presented in an English dress by Professor Stuart in the *Biblical Repository* for 1835, with very full notes and comments of his own; to whose articles on the subject I am indebted for many of the authorities above cited.

## NOTE SUPPLEMENTARY.

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SINCE the preceding pages were in type the work of Dr. Hopkins on "the Law of Love, and Love as a Law" has appeared, containing some strictures on the views maintained in my Moral Philosophy and also in these pages, respecting the ground of moral obligation. Referring to my position that right and wrong are distinctions eternal, immutable, and inherent in the very nature of things, in other words, that the actions and moral conduct of intelligent beings, created or uncreated, finite or infinite, are, in their very nature, right or wrong. Dr. Hopkins says: "Here, then, we have moral action which is eternal and has no origin; for if the distinction be eternal, inhering in the nature of things, the things themselves in which they inhere must also be eternal."

I reply, that does not necessarily follow. An act right or wrong may be committed to-day; this act of course is not eternal, but the distinction between right and wrong as moral qualities pertaining to this act, may have existed from eternity; that is to say, there may never have been a time when an action of this nature, had it been performed, would not have been as it is to-day, essentially and in itself a right act, or a wrong act. It is not necessary to suppose a murder actually committed in order to pronounce murder a crime. It is not necessary to suppose a straight line actually in existence in order to affirm a straight line to be the shortest distance between two points. The distinction exists as applicable to all cases of the sort, supposable or actual. There may not, as a matter of fact, be such a thing as a straight line in the world; yet that does not alter the case. If there never were

a murder or a theft committed it would still be true that murder and theft in their very idea and nature have a certain moral character inseparable from them. It does not follow that because the distinction of right and wrong is a distinction which is uncreated by the divine will and eternal, therefore the moral actions to which right and wrong pertain are also eternal.

There is not, however, any such absurdity as Dr. Hopkins seems to suppose, in speaking of moral action as eternal ; for if we conceive of Deity as existing from eternity, and as a being possessing moral character, then we do conceive of him as having from eternity exercised right and holy volitions and feelings, that is, right moral action.

But further, argues Dr. Hopkins, if right be a quality of actions then it cannot be the ground of obligation to perform those actions. "It is plain," he says, "that the quality of an action can never be the ground of an obligation to do that action." With all respect for Dr. Hopkins we must say that this does not strike us as being "plain" at all, but on the contrary, the very reverse is plain. A man sees that a certain possible and contemplated act will, if performed, be a right act. That is in itself, we should say, a sufficient reason why he should perform it. The obligation to perform it rests on and arises out of the simple rightness of the act. The obligation not to do that which is perceived to be wrong, as, for example, to commit murder, arises from the simple fact that it is wrong. But according to Dr. Hopkins, my obligation not to murder my neighbor arises not at all from the essential and inherent wrongfulness of such an act, but from some other source, since, if right and wrong are qualities of actions, they cannot be the ground of obligation to perform those actions. I confess I cannot see the logic of this. The very reason, I should say, why any right-minded moral being would condemn the act of murder as in the highest degree reprehensible, and affirm the obligation not to commit it, is precisely what Dr. Hopkins declares it is not ; to wit, the inherent wrongfulness of the act. "Certainly," says Dr. Hopkins, "if we regard

right as the quality of an action, no man can be under obligation to do an act morally right for which there is not a reason besides its being right, and on the ground of which it is right." He even goes so far as to say that if a man were to perform a right act, as, for example, an act of charity, simply because it was a right act, and for no other reason, "the act would not be right." What would it be then? we cannot but ask. It certainly has some moral character, and if not a right act, then it must of course be a wrong one. Here then we have what? "A right action" done "for the sake of the rightness of the act," and for that very reason a wrong act.

But suppose we apply this method of reasoning to Dr. Hopkin's own theory of the ground of obligation. The act in question is right because it is in conformity with the end of the man's being, and hence the obligation. But is not this conformity again a quality of the act? And if so how can it be the ground of the obligation to perform the act? For "it is plain," at least it was so a moment since, "that the quality of an action can never be the ground of an obligation to do that action."

This leads us to notice more particularly the system which Dr. Hopkins adopts as preferable to the one already considered. Conformity to the end of one's being is the rule of right and the ground of moral obligation, according to this system. The moral reason affirms obligation to conform to the end for which one is created, which is for him the supreme good. This obligation is ultimate.

This theory, it is evident, supposes a moral being to be a created being — which is true of some moral beings, but not of all — supposes him to be created for an end, and for a good end, which may and may not be the case. But suppose a being not created for a specific end, or for any good end; suppose him created for a positively bad end, or suppose him *not to have been created at all*, as in the case of the *very highest moral being in the universe*, but to be self-existent, infinite, and eternal. Has he then no moral character? The system



supposes what is indeed true — the existence of moral beings under the righteous rule of a benevolent Creator, who has called them into existence for wise and good ends — but what it has no right to assume, much less to make the basis of morality. It supposes what is manifestly not true, that all moral beings thus exist as created for an end. Morality must be placed on wider grounds than that, must include all beings, created or uncreated — God himself as chief of all.

But, aside from this, the theory fails even in its application to the present actual system under which as created beings we are living. A reason can always be assigned, says Dr. Hopkins, why a thing is right, and that reason, whatever it may be, is also the ground of the obligation in the case. What then, we ask, is the reason why it is right and obligatory for us to conform to the end of our being? It is right and binding on us thus to conform according to the theory, and there is a reason why it is right and binding. What is that reason? Suppose I do not choose thus to conform? "But you ought," says Dr. Hopkins, "the moral reason affirms this obligation." True, but on what ground? To say that the moral reason affirms it, is simply to say that I perceive and acknowledge it to be thus and thus. But on what ground this perceived obligation rests I am not yet informed. Is it that the end for which I am created is a benevolent one, and therefore I am bound to conform to it? But why am I bound to conform to a benevolent end? Is it that it is the will of the Creator that I should thus conform? But why am I bound to comply with his will? Shall we say, the obligation in question is ultimate, and no reason can be assigned why it is right and why it is binding on us to conform to the end of our being? So Dr. Hopkins seems to regard it. But what then becomes of the position that a *reason* can always be assigned *why* a thing is right, and upon that reason, whatever it be, rests the obligation to do the thing? Are we not after all in this very concession driven back to the conclusion that right is ultimate and inherent in the nature of things?